


WASHINGTON COLLEGE

# International Studies Review





WASHINGTON COLLEGE  
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES REVIEW

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# INTERNATIONAL STUDIES REVIEW

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The *Washington College International Studies Review* is a student journal intended to provide opportunities for undergraduates to publish research articles that contribute to the body of knowledge in international relations and related disciplines, provide fresh insight into the complexities of world affairs, and introduce readers to areas of the world they themselves have not yet explored. The *Washington College International Studies Review* is intended to showcase the research of students of the international disciplines. The journal welcomes writers from all fields of study who have undertaken a project with international concerns at its core, including the areas of politics, economics, literature, art, anthropology, environmental studies, history, and health studies. Washington College students and alumni traveling, working and living abroad are encouraged to submit travelogues for the Notes From Abroad section of the journal.

Electronic submissions and other inquiries should be sent to [is\\_review@washcoll.edu](mailto:is_review@washcoll.edu). For submission guidelines, to review past volumes and further information, visit our Web page at <http://isr.washcoll.edu/>.

The International Studies program is an interdisciplinary major that includes faculty from Anthropology, Business, Economics, Foreign Languages, History, and Political Science. In addition to the major, students may choose from five regional concentrations: Africa, East Asia, Latin America, Near East, and Western Europe. The academic program provides students with a strong foundation of theoretical knowledge and practical experience. The curriculum is enhanced with opportunities for internships; study abroad and foreign exchanges; extracurricular activities such as the Model United Nations and Model African Union as well as on-campus programming through the Goldstein Program in Public Affairs, International House and International Studies Council. Our majors have careers and advanced training in teaching, politics, business, journalism, international work, and public service.

Founded in 1782 under the patronage of George Washington, Washington College is a private, independent college of the liberal arts and sciences located in historic Chestertown on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

*Dedicated to*  
*Margaret Bennett*  
*in recognition of her generous support of*  
*the International Studies program*  
*and her passionate belief in international education.*

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## Editors' Note

IN THE FACE OF INCREASING GLOBAL COOPERATION and, simultaneously, global insecurity, maintaining an international dialogue becomes more important than ever. Research and communication are fundamental to promoting understanding, which is key to the success of our shared future. The importance of these tenets was well understood by the students who founded the *Washington College International Studies Review*, motivated by the desire to share their research, experiences, and interests in a more formal medium. We are pleased to bring you this sixth edition of the *Review*, which continues to be a testimony to the commitment of students to a higher degree of scholarship. This year our readers will have the chance to contemplate the fate of women in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the lives of Jewish ghetto residents in 1940s Lithuania, the role of Irish-Americans in supporting Irish independence, the repercussions of United States domestic and international policy in Latin America, the implications of Kosovo's independence on Serbia, the gender bias inherent in the study and practice of terrorism, and the effect of re-emerging Buddhism on prospects for reconciliation in Cambodia. This volume of the *Review* also features our "Notes from Abroad" section. We are lucky to have alumni and current students who have had extraordinary opportunities abroad and choose to share with us their personal experiences. We encourage alumni to continue to contribute their stories, and sincerely thank those who submitted to this year's "Notes from Abroad."

We would like to thank Dr. Tahir Shad, Director of the International Studies Program and Curator of the Louis L. Goldstein Program in Public Affairs, and Kevin Coveney, Vice President for Admissions, for their financial support. We would also like to thank Diane Landskroener for her excellent production design. Finally, we are grateful to everyone who

submitted entries for consideration, and hope you consider doing so again in the future. Without your dedication and enthusiasm, the *Washington College International Studies Review* would not be possible.

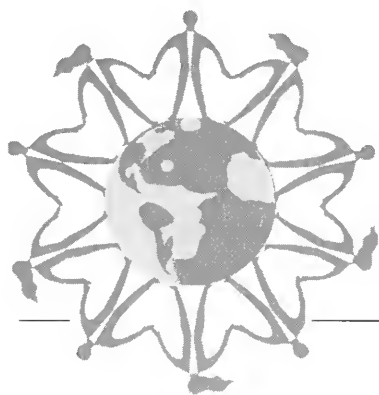
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## ARTICLES





# We were all conspirators – we were all victims.

## Balancing Past Atrocities and Reconciliation in Cambodia

TRICIA BONMAN

CAMBODIA HAS EXPERIENCED devastation in every sense of the word. The political and psychological landscape of the country has remained largely unchanged in the past decades since the signing of the Paris Peace Accords in 1991, ostensibly ending a conflict that had been raging since 1970. Since 1991, both the people and politicians of Cambodia and the international community have struggled with the question of how to approach the process of reconciliation in a country so thoroughly damaged, both in physical infrastructure and in human capital. The danger of forgetting the past is dire and very real in Cambodia today. There are multiple obstacles to navigate before reconciliation can take root, which includes a culture of non-confrontation and obedience, the continuing presence of Khmer Rouge leaders in politics today, and the question of who and how many to prosecute, among others. The main obstacle thus far for reconciliation has been the apathy and fear still rampant among the civilian population in Cambodia. A UN-Cambodian Tribunal was organized under intense international pressure and has yet to make significant strides in the prosecution of war crimes. The only way for

reconciliation to occur and survive in Cambodia is through being rooted in civil society, not in an internationally imposed mandate, and it is also imperative that the Cambodian people are not tempted into ignoring the horrors of their past. For reconciliation to prove sustainable, it is necessary that the process proceed through a truly Cambodian lens, shed light on what really occurred, and involve civil society; this could be achieved by the convention of a truth commission that adopts the non-politicized Middle Path propagated by Khmer Buddhism in the recent years.

The Paris Peace Accords of 1991 were signed October 23 by the four factions that were fighting for control of politics in Cambodia and by nineteen other nations in an incredible display of international involvement. The United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia was charged with returning the country to a state in which it could function independently and fairly on national and international levels, given only the timeframe of February 1992 to September 1993, when elections were held. As the world and Cambodian citizens have since discovered, a year is simply not enough time to extinguish the effects of a political culture marred by corruption, patronage, and domination by a single figure or party, and to assure a severely traumatized population of the achievement of a return to peace and trust. As a demonstration of the depth of trauma experienced, a study of Cambodian psychiatric patients revealed that "Cambodian patients were found to have experienced an average of sixteen major trauma events...from four general categories: deprivation (food, shelter, medical care), physical injury and torture, incarceration/concentration camps, and witnessing killing or torture."<sup>1</sup> The worst atrocities occurred during the years 1975-1979 under the direction of Pol Pot, leader of the Khmer Rouge, whose policies resulted in an estimated 1.7 million casualties.

The 1991 Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict resolved to "promote national reconciliation" in the country despite not actually specifying any measures to do to.<sup>2</sup> The agreement recognized that in light of recent tragedy "special measures" were required "to assure protection of human rights, and the non-return to the policies and practices of the past" in the preamble and reasserts again in Part III—which addresses human rights—Article 15 that Cambodia "undertakes to...take effective measures to ensure that the policies and practices of the past shall never be allowed to return."<sup>3</sup> Again, there is no mention of what these effective measures should look like or attempt to do in order to



prevent the repetition of history. In the intervening years since the signing of the Accords, these never-specified measures have yet to be put into place.

Reconciliation through justice is the notion the international community has been pushing in Cambodia. Weakening this argument are the facts that in the years immediately following the Khmer Rouge only ten law graduates remained in the country, and there is still a lack of human capital and judicial infrastructure.<sup>4</sup> The seeds for an eventual UN-Cambodian Tribunal were put into place when the United States Congress passed the Cambodian Genocide Justice Act in 1994, promising U.S. support for justice against members of the Khmer Rouge, but negotiations within the Cambodian government did not begin until 1999.<sup>5</sup> This again demonstrates the degree of international interest in the Cambodian situation. The Cambodian government passed the tribunal bill in July 2001, without the support of opposition party leader Sam Rainsy, who called "for the US and the World Bank to withdraw funding for the trial and for Cambodia saying that the money only goes to corrupted officials."<sup>6</sup> Negotiations opened with the United Nations, were broken off by the UN in 2002, and were reopened later that year, with an agreement finally being signed in 2003.<sup>7</sup> The first trial is scheduled to take place in July 2008, but the tribunal is beset with budget and time problems, and it is unlikely to go forward as planned.<sup>8</sup> None of these actions originated from a desire from the people of Cambodia. This clearly demonstrates the problems with trying to achieve reconciliation through a top-down, political approach when politics in Cambodia are rife with corruption and unlikely to change.

The hole left by the Peace Accords and by the torpid activity of the UN-Cambodian Tribunal in the area of societal reconciliation is one that can be filled by the participation of civil society in the healing process. Civil society was completely and systematically ravaged during Cambodia's long period of conflict, especially during the years of Democratic Kampuchea, when, as noted by Dith Pran, a survivor of the conflict and photojournalist, "betrayal could be purchased for a kilo of rice."<sup>9</sup> Civil society is essential for both economic growth and eventual political accountability.<sup>10</sup> It has an important role to play in a society such as Cambodia; participation of the people and their investment in their community and nation can only serve to strengthen the process of democratization, which has stalled with the grip of the Cambodian People's Party on political power. Civil society organizations "nurture norms of trust, reciprocity, compromise, and cooperation,

which are essential for democratic ethos.”<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, these values have been lacking in Cambodia, as civil society has been traditionally weak in Cambodian culture.

Historically speaking, civil society in Cambodia is a relatively new concept. Up until the arrival of the French colonizers in the mid-nineteenth century, Cambodia was made up of highly independent villages. When additional organization was needed in cases such as a religious ceremony or to defend against a “common threat, the response was situational and short term,” and afterward they would return to their previous configuration.<sup>12</sup> Cambodians place heavy importance on hierarchy and their correct place within it, the protection offered by patron-client relationships, harmony above all else in inter-personal relationships, and the avoidance of risk.<sup>13</sup> These values encourage embracing the status quo and a fear of change. Seanglim Bit writes:

There is little semblance of a conflict-resolution process in the Cambodian culture. Compromise or reconciliation of divergent views, therefore, has not developed as a way to achieve peaceful change. Problems...are addressed by the use of power, or by seeking the intervention of another more powerful patron, or by splitting off in a new direction or creating a new alliance.<sup>14</sup>

This environment gave rise to one in which authoritarianism is easily practiced and accepted, and individual rights are a foreign concept. Individual rights were further and conscientiously obliterated during the rule of the Khmer Rouge, when the organization, known as the Angkar, dictated every facet of life. This was “extended to even the types of clothing and haircuts favored in the peasant ideal.”<sup>15</sup> The people lost the right to have control over even the most mundane aspects of their lives. In addition, the loyalty of Cambodians is always due to the government in power because it is identified as loyalty to the Cambodian nation.<sup>16</sup> This type of adherence to whatever individual or party seizes power in the country has not allowed for the development of an independent, vibrant civil society and has been further damaged by atrocities in the country’s past.

However, in its tragic past Cambodia may be able to discover the tools to work toward a reconciled future. Skulls and bones of victims of the Khmer Rouge, exhumed by government order after the Khmer Rouge were driven out by the Vietnamese, are piled as monuments, or forgotten along the

sides of the road in some provinces, serving as testaments to a history that is slowly being neglected.<sup>17</sup> Their significance is largely a mystery to generations too young to have experienced the horrors of the past. In an attempt to combat ignorance about the country's history, national museums have been opened at Tuol Sleng, the site of one of the most notorious prisons and torture facilities of the Khmer Rouge, known as S-21, and Choeung Ek, the location of the graves of the victims of S-21 and the killing fields, where victims were "bludgeoned to death in order to save bullets."<sup>18</sup> Due to the Khmer Rouge's meticulous records, it is known that S-21 at its height claimed over a hundred victims a day.<sup>19</sup> 9,000 skulls have been counted at Choeung Ek, and an estimated 17,000 victims met their end here.<sup>20</sup>

It is a grievous disservice to the victims' memory and a regrettable roadblock to tapping these monuments' capacities as fomenters of education and reconciliation that the Cambodian government has wielded them as political weapons. Terence Duffy writes that the government has "exploited Tuol Sleng as an instrument of propaganda to boost its popularity by focusing hatred on its predecessor," despite the fact that many in government are former Khmer Rouge officers.<sup>21</sup> Yet these officials still utilize these facilities to promote their own self-serving interests. Duffy describes the state of Choeung Ek as a "sordid theme park of indiscriminate violence and political brutality, which the Phnom Penh administration has sought to use for political purposes."<sup>22</sup> In order that Tuol Sleng and Choeung Ek serve instead as implements of education and reconciliation they must return to a non-politicized state, to monuments that belong to the people. The Cambodian people are still struggling with questions of forgiveness and unity, and the presence of these monuments as non-political elements may help them in that endeavor.

The Cambodian people are slowly beginning to reform some semblance of civil society, which will also prove to be a great help in the reconciliation process. In the past years, there have been encouraging developments in civil society. A free press has emerged, voter turnout for elections has been high, and associations have formed for groups such as women and workers in certain industries; these developments can be harnessed for the movement towards reconciliation in Cambodia. The most effective forces to facilitate this achievement are Buddhist leaders and monks, who have traditionally served as sources of authority and advocates of familiar cultural values. Buddhism in Cambodia "has always been much more than a

religion...it is a social doctrine encompassing all aspects of life.”<sup>23</sup> As such, it was one of the aspects of ordinary life targeted for destruction by the Khmer Rouge during their years in power. Of the 60,000 Buddhist monks in Cambodia prior to 1975, fewer than one thousand survived until 1979.<sup>24</sup> After its attempted obliteration, Buddhism is again beginning to thrive in Cambodia as a way of life. In 1988, it was formerly restored as the national religion, although it has not yet reached its pre-1975 prestige.<sup>25</sup> However, it is necessary that Buddhism escape the path that Tuol Sleng and Choeung Ek have suffered and avoid becoming agents of the political system so many Cambodians distrust.

Buddhist monks are deeply involved in the movement for social peace in Cambodia. They participate on the community level in training seminars that aim to promote values of human rights and democracy and in enterprises that are designed to end or diminish poverty.<sup>26</sup> Beyond being moral authorities, Buddhist monks also are important figures for the transmission of knowledge. Cambodians have a preference for receiving news about current events such as government policies through discussion and conversation, a role that Buddhist monks play, making them important instruments for disseminating information.<sup>27</sup> Historically speaking, temples devoted to Buddhism became “the main medium through which the Khmer language and culture [were] transmitted, explaining why it remains intricately woven into the current social fabric despite Cambodia’s tumultuous past.”<sup>28</sup> Khmer Buddhism has also begun a process of adapting to the realities of a still devastated Cambodia.

The Middle Path, “the traditional metaphor for the Buddhist way – neither joining the fight nor hiding from it,” can prove to be an extremely powerful tool in inciting a grassroots movement for the inception of reconciliation in Cambodia.<sup>29</sup> This is especially relevant in light of the fact that 90 percent of Cambodians prescribe to the Buddhist faith.<sup>30</sup> A particularly poignant example of the ability of Buddhism to incite astonishing grassroots involvement is the Dhammayietra movement. The Dhammayietra, which means “pilgrimage of truth,” was founded in 1992 by the late Maha Ghosananda, a Cambodian Buddhist monk, survivor of the years of Khmer Rouge rule, and three-time Nobel Peace Prize nominee.<sup>31</sup> The Dhammayietra is a walk that spans the country with the goal of promoting peace and reconciliation, although each year may have its own focus. Past focuses include refugees, deforestation, and land mines.<sup>32</sup> Walkers hand out

pamphlets and spread awareness among Cambodian citizens during their cross-country trek. Ghosananda, known as the Cambodian Ghandi, had this view on the peace walks and reconciliation:

It is a law of the universe that retaliation, hatred, and revenge only continue the cycle and never stop it...Reconciliation does not mean that we surrender rights and conditions, but rather that we use love. Our wisdom and our compassion must walk together. Having one without the other is like walking on one foot; you will fall. Balancing the two, you will walk very well, step by step.<sup>33</sup>

One of the goals of the Dhammayietra is to spread these teachings and the idea of reconciliation through a foundation of compassion. It accomplishes this through required training sessions for the participants, whose numbers have ranged from 400 to 700 people, which discuss applying Buddhist concepts to the "difficulties of everyday life," peace making, non-violence, handling fear, and mine awareness, among other concepts.<sup>34</sup>

The number of participants often swells into the thousands, as Cambodian citizens spontaneously join the walk as it weaves through the countryside and cities.<sup>35</sup> The first peace walk in 1992 began in the refugee camps on the Thai-Cambodian border with Phnom Penh as the final destination. It resulted in many refugees being reunited with family members they had not seen since the 1970s, and in addition to the thousands of Cambodians who joined the peace walk, "tens of thousands demonstrated their support for the walkers as they passed through provincial seats along the way to the capital."<sup>36</sup> Buddhism, in the form of the Dhammayietra, has managed to transform the past into positive social action – justice does not have to come in the form of retribution.

Unfortunately, its commitment to non-violence does not mean other forces will respect the principle of non-violence as well. Walkers have been caught in crossfire and ongoing shelling, which resulted in several casualties in 1993 and 1994.<sup>37</sup> Efforts were made to improve training for participants and ensure no military participation, since the presence of soldiers to protect the peace walkers in 1994 was the catalyst for a conflict with another armed group. Despite a few setbacks, the Dhammayietra is a firm testament to the Middle Path and its power in attracting the participation of civil society in Cambodia. As the tenets of the Dhammayietra demonstrate, an approach to reconciliation that galvanizes civil society is possible through

the encouragement of a non-political process, which can be applied to the mechanisms of a truth commission.

Discovering the truth in Cambodia, where there are multiple versions currently being propagated by the government, the remaining elements of the Khmer Rouge, the international community, and Cambodian survivors, can be undertaken along this Middle Path as an important step towards eventual reconciliation.<sup>38</sup> Truth commissions do not guarantee reconciliation, but the exposure of the truth in Cambodia is necessary so that the evils of the past do not repeat themselves. It is entirely imperative that the younger generations know what came to pass and know as close of a version to the whole truth as is possible to extract. It is a chilling notion that “youths under twenty or twenty-five, not old enough to remember the violence, have very little idea what happened under the Khmer Rouge. On the rare occasions when survivors tell their stories, the youths tend to think they’re joking or exaggerating.”<sup>39</sup> The death of 1.7 million people should not be an episode in history remembered only by a few generations or as a closely guarded secret.

A well-organized and well-publicized truth commission is the most qualified mechanism to prevent this from occurring. Civil society is also key in this process, as Priscilla Hayner comments, “the strength of civil society in any given country...will partly determine the success of a truth commission.”<sup>40</sup> Cambodia is no exception, but perhaps the truth commission, whatever its composition may be, can learn from the experiences of past truth commissions and from Khmer Buddhism. Buddhism has made significant strides in galvanizing the population of the country into action. It is important to be aware of the cultural traditions in Cambodia, emphasize the non-politicization of the process and the commitment to only discovering the truth, and to stress that it is not for any sort of political gain.

Cambodians have in the past shown little interest in confronting their history, but if the truth commission took an approach that instead emphasized principles espoused by Buddhist theory – that the commission is not an exercise in prolonging the hate and violence but rather a method of meditating on the past – it could prove successful and useful in reconciliation.<sup>41</sup> Hayner suggests that a truth commission in Cambodia would look different from its predecessors and that perhaps instead of taking individual testimony it would gather information from community leaders in order to gauge the effect of violence in a given area.<sup>42</sup> Here again it would be

advantageous to look at the experiences of Buddhism in Cambodia, which has been successful in encouraging thousands of Cambodians to take a stand for peace and reconciliation. A truth commission may be able to disseminate information and educate about the purpose of a commission through the roles Buddhist monks have traditionally filled as educators and Cambodian equivalents of town criers.

In case a truth commission is ever convened, the international community has loosely implicated itself in the Peace Accords as a source of support, having promised in Article 29 to “ensure respect for these commitments” which includes the as-yet unfulfilled commitment to “take effective measures to ensure that the policies and practices of the past shall never be allowed to return.”<sup>43</sup> The involvement of the international community in the push for a truth commission could prove very useful, but only if they remain respectful of Cambodian civil society and do not attempt to force a Western view of justice onto the people they are trying to aid. Hayner points out that the international community can have a role as a guarantor of accountability and a source of funding and personnel, important in a country with a lack of economic and human capital.<sup>44</sup> The most crucial factor in determining whether a truth commission should be convened in Cambodia is whether or not there is a genuine desire stemming from civil society, a desire that can be nurtured by elements with strong connections to civil society.

Reconciliation in a country that lost over 20 percent of its population in four years and is characterized by a culture of non-confrontation will never have a simple or singular solution. A multitude of factors must coalesce in order to ensure sustainable reconciliation in Cambodia; first and foremost among them is a willingness to participate in a process of reconciliation that originates from its people. A truth commission can aid in this process by ensuring the past will not be forgotten and by reconciling the many versions of the truth that circulate through different levels of Cambodian society and the international community – the truth according to the Khmer Rouge or the truth according to the United States are obviously not the whole truth. Any kind of reconciliation process in Cambodia would be wise to learn from the tenets of Khmer Buddhism and continue the progression of healing Buddhist leaders have begun with such activities as the Dhammayietra peace walks. If designed in a careful and culturally sensitive manner, a truth commission in Cambodia could transmute characteristics of Cambodian

society that have customarily hampered the development of reconciliation, such as a tendency to prefer non-confrontation, into elements that encourage societal healing. The creation of lasting reconciliation and peace in Cambodia will be a long process. In the words of Maha Ghosananda, "Our journey for peace begins today and every day. Slowly, slowly, each step is a prayer, each step is a meditation, each step will build a bridge."<sup>45</sup>

## ENDNOTES

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## Strings Attached

### The Foreign Consequences of Domestic Political Influence in the United States HIV/AIDS Support

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**I**N RECENT YEARS, the United States has dramatically increased its support for the global fight against HIV/AIDS. The administration of President George W. Bush underscored American financial and political support abroad by increasing both funding and advocacy commitments to a variety of global organizations and nations. This support, however, was influenced by the administration's conservative social values and ideological prioritization at the expense of truly effective policies. Dean Jamison, economist and lead editor for the *Disease Control Priorities in Developing Countries*, effectively summarized the implications of President Bush's HIV/AIDS efforts abroad:

Billions of dollars can be poorly spent, and thousands of deaths incurred, from failure to consider the existing evidence and failure to gather evidence of effectiveness from existing interventions. The government owes this leadership not only to American taxpayers and our international partners but, most important, to all the people around the world affected by the specter of HIV/AIDS.<sup>1</sup>

The complexities inherent in the growing AIDS epidemic in Latin America, stemming from cultural and societal traditions and values, in addition to socioeconomic factors, were aggravated by the Bush administration's

narrow approach to providing financial and political support to the struggling region, which are not only inefficient but possibly even detrimental in the battle against the HIV virus.

The HIV/AIDS crisis has continued to grow both in the number of victims and in complexity. Based upon the research presented by the *2008 UN Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic*, the overall number of individuals infected by the HIV virus has steadily increased, although the global percentage of those infected has stabilized since 2000.<sup>2</sup> Despite this reported stabilization, the numbers of those with infected HIV/AIDS is staggering--an estimated 33 million people worldwide carry the disease. While falling rates of new HIV infections in some nations create a similar positive statistical illusion, the infection rates in other nations have then subsequently increased.<sup>3</sup> Latin America is one of the regions experiencing an increase in HIV infections. In 2007, there were approximately 140,000 new HIV infections, bringing the region's total number of HIV positive individuals to 1.7 million.<sup>4</sup> This quiet and crippling phenomenon is described by the Council on Hemispheric Affairs in their 2006 report: "In the shadow of the more-publicized African crisis, the AIDS epidemic in Latin America has slowly infected the most vulnerable, poverty-stricken strata of society, exacerbating the plight of an already economically handicapped region."<sup>5</sup>

Despite the global support to fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the very same interests that contributed to its financial strength hampered the effective utilization of these funds. The international community contributed \$10 billion to battle the spread of HIV/AIDS worldwide in 2007, targeting low and middle-income countries for HIV prevention, treatment and care, program costs and staffing, in addition to the care of orphans and vulnerable children. Although this sum was the result of the collaboration of several sources, including multilateral funding organizations like the World Bank and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, as well as private sector organizations like religious groups and charity organizations, the largest donor group has consistently been national governments like the United States, France, and the United Kingdom.<sup>6</sup> The HIV/AIDS funding provided by this global cooperative was then distributed to struggling nations through their public bodies, such as the Ministry of Health or National AIDS Council, and non-governmental organizations within the community.<sup>7</sup> The importance of these public bodies and community organizations cannot be understated. They witness the truly devastating

effects of the virus and are thus able to make the best possible use of funds based upon areas of greatest need. However, the implementation of aid by public bodies and community groups is often hampered by other factors, including the lack of infrastructure within the nation and the simple lack of actual funds following expenditures in the transitioning of money through banks and other methods.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, HIV/AIDS funds can sometimes be dictated by the interests of donors, instead of the needs of the populations suffering from the virus.

The United States under the Bush administration became a classic example of such a donor nation with “strings attached” to its aid. Beginning with his *State of the Union Address* in January 2003, President Bush publicly stated his commitment to fight the global HIV/AIDS epidemic and subsequently created and funded the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which contributes to international efforts to combat the disease.<sup>9</sup> The legislation that marked the beginning of such initiatives, the “United States Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria Act of 2003,” committed \$15 billion over five years in addition to providing the legal and policy framework for the PEPFAR program.<sup>10</sup> Because of this precedent, the U.S. spent \$6 billion in 2008 alone. Due to increased awareness of the growing AIDS epidemic in Latin America, the U.S. included additional nations from the region in the “focus” countries that receive the most aid and amended the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to specifically mention the Latin American region as one in desperate need of aid.<sup>11</sup> Funding totaled \$18.8 billion over five years, and it assisted in the prevention and treatment of the disease for millions of people worldwide. As described by the president in his 2008 *State of the Union* address: “... America is leading the fight against disease... Our Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief is treating 1.4 million people. We can bring healing and hope to many more.”<sup>12</sup> The U.S. has, in fact, contributed to the progress in the global fight against AIDS and helped contribute to the overall decline in the disease. However, the guidelines with which the PEPFAR funds have been appropriated have sometimes caused more hardship than help.

In order to truly comprehend the devastating effects of such narrow HIV/AIDS relief funding upon Latin America’s battle against the disease, it is first important to understand both the scope of the epidemic as well as the cultural and socioeconomic factors which fuel the spread of the HIV virus. On the surface, the AIDS crisis in Latin America appears to be ridden with

many of the usual characteristics regarding the spread of the virus. Although each of the sub-regions within Latin America is affected differently by the disease, the primary method of HIV virus transmission has been among men who have sex with men, sex workers, and (to a lesser extent) intravenous drug users.<sup>13</sup> However, the number of infected females is growing at an alarming rate due to unprotected sex (mostly heterosexual) as male carriers of the HIV virus infect their female sexual partners following sex with men or intravenous drug use. This form of virus transmission accounts for approximately two-thirds of newly reported HIV cases in Uruguay.<sup>14</sup> Throughout Latin America, treatment for the disease has improved in both quality and availability; however, deep social inequalities still exist.<sup>15</sup>

The cultural aspects of the spread of HIV/AIDS are perhaps most crucial to the prevention and treatment of this disease in Latin America. At the heart of Latin American culture is *machismo*, or Latino masculinity. *Machismo* is a learned concept of sexuality and relationships between men and women, where males are raised to have many positive values such as loyalty and personal integrity. However, *machismo* also promotes "promiscuity regardless of marital status, not talking about sex with women, and being in control of the sexual dyad in terms of frequency, initiation, and actual practices."<sup>16</sup> This leads to a "domineering" relationship between men and women in Latin America, where men are rewarded for their sexual conquests and masculine behavior and women are expected to remain subservient and repressed in their sexuality. A 20-year-old man interviewed for Noland's study effectively describes how men and women are viewed in such a society:

I don't see a problem with a man going around and doing anything he pleases. A woman, she has to be more careful because she has more to lose... Getting pregnant, that could ruin her life. The fact is that most of Puerto Rico society is composed by machismo so she'll be very criticized.<sup>17</sup>

*Machismo* results in lack of communication in sexual relations, as well as irresponsible sexual behavior among men, promoting behaviors like unprotected promiscuity coupled with emotional and physical abuse of women through rape. *Machismo* also reinforces to homophobia, another societal issue within Latin America, which will be addressed later.

Overall, the lack of communication due to *machismo* leads to widespread ignorance regarding not only the spread of HIV/AIDS, but also knowledge



and use of condoms as well as use of other family planning and reproductive healthcare services, often at the expense of the health of both men and women in Latin America. This trend was effectively demonstrated in a 2007 study conducted by the Department of Evolutionary and Education Psychology in which 218 Spanish adolescents and Latin American immigrants were compared based upon sexual health knowledge and activities.<sup>18</sup> It was discovered that Latin American adolescents became sexually active at an earlier age and had many more casual sex partners. Additionally, only 58 percent of the Latin American adolescents used contraceptive methods consistently compared to 78.8 percent of the Spanish youth.<sup>19</sup> In fact, only two of every ten Latin American adolescents in the study used condoms “almost always’ when having sex with vaginal penetration,” undoubtedly leading to the 5.7 percent of them having suffered from a sexually transmitted infection in past 6 months, nearly four times the Spanish rate.<sup>20</sup> Although this is merely a sample of sexual attitudes and behaviors, additional studies and research have contributed to the conclusion that not only is sexual health knowledge limited by availability, but also in largely due to cultural constraints, leading to the continued proliferation of HIV/AIDS.

The sexual behavior that is most prevalent in the spread of the deadly HIV virus is also stigmatized within Latin American society. Men having sex with men, or MSM, is the primary way in which the virus is spread in the region. As described by the Foundation for AIDS Research (amFAR) in its comprehensive 2008 report regarding this quiet and potentially deadly behavior, “MSM are 33 times more likely to be infected than the general population.” In addition, “MSM make up nearly a quarter of those infected with HIV in Latin America as a whole” while “programs targeted toward MSM receive less than one percent of total HIV/AIDS spending in the region.”<sup>21</sup> Because of *machismo*, open homosexual behavior is widely considered deviant despite the apparent proliferation of MSM among even those men in public heterosexual relationships. Some countries in Latin America have even criminalized sexual activity between men, adding to the 86 countries worldwide which have made such behavior illegal and sometimes punishable by death.<sup>22</sup> The latent homophobia present in society has led to violence and discrimination against individuals caught or suspected of homosexual behavior in many areas of Latin America. For example, in Mexico alone, 1,200 citizens were killed between 1995 and 2006 because of their sexual orientation.<sup>23</sup>

An increasingly prevalent consequence of this homophobia is limited treatment of HIV/AIDS, as some medical professionals and healthcare services in the region deny access to HIV positive homosexuals and sometimes even openly harass or discriminate against these individuals. In the Caribbean this has become particularly troubling, as this Human Rights Watch report on Jamaica clearly illustrates: "Men who have sex with men reported that health workers had refused to treat them at all, made abusive comments to them, and disclosed their sexual orientation, putting them at risk of homophobic violence by others."<sup>24</sup> In many cases the police even participate in the discrimination by refusing to protect such individuals from violence, or by sometimes participating in attacks. The cultural traditions of Latin America have also created a joint stigma, as HIV/AIDS has now become in many nations the equivalent of homosexuality, essentially seen as a disease of homosexuals.<sup>25</sup> Women are increasingly the target of HIV/AIDS based discrimination as well. Widespread ignorance of HIV/AIDS has allowed the stigma to flourish throughout society. Although some Latin American countries have attempted to address these issues as a human rights violation and enacted certain legislation to prevent such practices, the underlying prevalence of homophobia continues to dominate the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the region. Discrimination against individuals infected with HIV/AIDS has dire consequences for the battle against this epidemic in Latin America, as individuals increasingly avoid accessing treatment for HIV/AIDS, as well as preventative information and testing for the virus, driving the crisis underground where no amount of international funding can help stop this deadly disease.

Discrimination against those infected with HIV/AIDS is not limited to treatment in Latin America; however, the victims of societal discrimination in the disease are increasingly women and the poor.<sup>26</sup> Another consequence of MSM within Latin America and the spread of HIV/AIDS is the transmission of the HIV virus from men who have sex with men while in heterosexual relationships with women, as well as those that use intravenous drugs, both leading to increased infection of women. Biologically, women are more vulnerable to the HIV virus, particularly young women, as they are twice as likely become infected from sexual intercourse, while aggression and violence in sexual activity increases this risk through abrasions and cuts.<sup>27</sup> Within *machismo*, such violence is unfortunately common and requests by women for the use of condoms are very often ignored, or

simply unheard of, as Katia Souto, the head of the AIDS prevention division at the Health Ministry of Brazil, describes: "It is very difficult for a 13 or 14-year-old girl to convince a young man who is three years older to use a condom, especially for the first time."<sup>28</sup> Even within marriages, the use of condoms is considered abnormal, as this Mexican cab driver explains: "If my wife tells me to use a condom, she's planting the seeds of mistrust... using a condom undermines the trust that one has in one's partner."<sup>29</sup> With *machismo* rewarding men for promiscuity and sexual conquest, it is difficult for any woman to protect herself against the spread of HIV/AIDS as she seeks to fulfill her role as subservient homemaker, often ignorant to the impending consequences of her partner's unfaithful behavior.

In addition to the existing treatment discrimination, once infected with the virus, women face humiliation and are often ostracized by society for being sexually deviant, with their children targeted as well.<sup>30</sup> The side-effects of HIV/AIDS treatment are also more physically and emotionally detrimental to females. Anti-retroviral combination drug therapy, which delays the onset of AIDS and improves overall quality of life, leads to severe osteoporosis—the progressive loss of bone mass—in addition to lipodystrophy, or the redistribution of fat in the body, as well as depression.<sup>31</sup> The gender inequality stemming from *machismo* also results in women's reliance upon men for financial support, often leading to additional hardship once they are diagnosed with the disease. In Brazil, despite an impressive HIV/AIDS program, individuals are increasingly discriminated against for carrying the HIV virus, with the derogatory term "aidectica" used to offend AIDS patients even within everyday life.<sup>32</sup> HIV positive men and women can be denied insurance or enrollment in a health plan, leading to further financial troubles such as inability to secure loans and mortgages. Females often suffer the most given their economic disadvantage, particularly when cast out by husbands or families. Women are thus burdened with not only the societal consequences, but also the responsibilities to her children, all while suffering from her deteriorating health, as Dr. Anabella Arrendondo of CONASIDA (National AIDS Commission) explained regarding Chile in particular: "We are now seeing the 'feminization' of AIDS, which means it is growing faster among women than men, and female carriers are generally more vulnerable in economic terms, as they tend to be homemakers."<sup>33</sup> The limitations on women's reproductive rights and her rights within society continue to have a costly effect upon the health of Latin America.

Sex workers are especially vulnerable to the spread of HIV/AIDS, as failure to use condoms has led to increased HIV transmission. The Pan American Social Marketing Association sponsored a study of prostitution in Central America in 2002 and discovered that, although ignorance is partly to blame as many sex workers are not directly informed as to the proper use of condoms, "the inferior position of women in these societies and their limited ability to negotiate condom use with male clients" is also an integral factor.<sup>34</sup> The study revealed that of the 1,600 prostitutes surveyed over a 12-month period in Central America, 41 percent claimed they had engaged in condom-less sex while a mere 1 percent actually knew the correct way in which to use one.<sup>35</sup> Again, such frightening limitations in understanding of sexual health and reproductive rights of women have led to the spread of HIV/AIDS throughout Latin America.

Within the context of Latin America in the twenty-first century and its battle against the deadly HIV/AIDS epidemic, given these cultural restraints and practical considerations, the Bush administration's qualifications for aid through PEPFAR and other programs appeared misguided to many both in the U.S. and abroad in providing effective support for all necessary measures in this health crisis. Even some former U.S. government officials charged with enacting those restrictive policies expressed criticisms, such as Dr. Paul Zeitz, Executive Director of the Global AIDS Alliance and former official with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID):

PEPFAR is failing to stop the global spread of AIDS and failing to help lead the world to stop this deadly disease. Instead of empowering local people, we are restricting them. We have a flawed framework with flawed policies that have kept us from being where we should be by now.<sup>36</sup>

These restrictions dictate the use of U.S. aid for HIV/AIDS programs within the region once the public offices or nongovernmental community organizations receive the funding and, as will be subsequently demonstrated, were often tied more to socially conservative values related to family planning instead of HIV/AIDS prevention. This led some in Latin America, including Brazil, to refuse aid for their HIV/AIDS programs, believing instead that freedom to address the crisis comprehensively accomplishes more for the health of the region than accommodating American interests.<sup>37</sup> With

further analysis, it is evident that the U.S. qualifications for HIV/AIDS support were misguided within the context of Latin America.

Then George W. Bush reinstated the Mexico City policy on his first day in office.<sup>38</sup> Otherwise known as the “global gag rule,” this measure was first implemented by President Ronald Reagan in 1984 at a conference on population held in Mexico City. It effectively eliminated U.S. family planning funding for any foreign nongovernmental organizations that are involved with abortion services in any way, including advice, information, or referrals for abortion services, advocacy for abortion legalization, public information campaigns regarding abortion services, distribution of equipment used for abortion services, and of course those that provide legal, safe abortion services.<sup>39</sup> This applied to those organizations that also used their own independent funding for such services. Since it was already illegal to use federal funds for abortion services, this measure is then appropriately called a “gag rule” since it restricts medical providers in even the information they are able to discuss with their patients regarding legal abortion procedures.

Since so many women in developing nations, like those in Latin America, already have restricted access to reproductive rights and healthcare options, the Mexico City policy is quite damaging, as Kenyan obstetrician-gynecologist, Dr. Solomon Orero, describes: “When a woman gets pregnant in the developing world, she may see no choice for herself [but abortion] if society or her family decides she should not be pregnant.”<sup>40</sup> As a result of this Mexico City policy, much of the funding put forth by the Bush administration never reached many of the organizations in Latin America in desperate need of aid and assistance in their battle against HIV/AIDS. Also, many women resorted to dangerous measures to prevent their child from living a life infected with HIV/AIDS, particularly when the mother herself is infected and under extreme stress from societal and health implications. As described in this 2003 Women’s Health Collection study on Argentina, “If women cannot prevent these pregnancies, many—especially poor women—will resort to unsafe abortions, as is already happening and surely will increase with the ensuing risk of death.”<sup>41</sup> PEPFAR’s tying of ideologically motivated policies to aid failed to empower women in their battle against HIV/AIDS.

In similar fashion, the prevention methods advocated by U.S. HIV/AIDS funding were also based upon socially conservative values. Relying on a simplistic model of “ABC,” or Abstinence, Be Faithful, and correct

and consistent use of Condoms, many experts have argued that such policies are not helpful in dealing with the HIV/AIDS crisis in societies like Latin America where violence and gender inequality are of concern.<sup>42</sup> In fact, this ABC method was reduced to "AB" throughout its implementation by the U.S., which chose not only downplay the role of condoms in HIV prevention but even emphasized the lack of condom effectiveness in educational materials and programs subsidized with federal funds, ignoring the scientific evidence proving that male condoms are 80-95 percent effective in reducing the risk of HIV infection when used correctly.<sup>43</sup> Instead, the U.S. policies heavily promoted abstinence-only programs to educate individuals about the spread of HIV/AIDS, with one-third of all prevention dollars being used for this effort.<sup>44</sup> Not only have abstinence programs been proven ineffective even within the U.S., but studies indicate they may actually limit knowledge regarding safer sex practices and use of contraceptives, like condoms. Particularly in male dominated societies like Latin America, such methods are also completely impractical, as this amFAR report describes: "A major criticism of this policy is that abstinence-until-marriage programs fail to address the fact that, given gender inequities and varying cultural norms about acceptable male and female sexual behavior, marriage and faithfulness do not necessarily protect women and girls from HIV."<sup>45</sup> Again, such limitations in access to comprehensive reproductive health information by the U.S. under the Bush administration did little to empower women and men in Latin America in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The PEPFAR plan and other U.S. commitments to fight HIV/AIDS within in the international community also held stipulations regarding the distribution of funds to organizations that provided services to sex workers. In order to receive U.S. funds, organizations had to take an "anti-prostitution loyalty oath" advocating their opposition to prostitution, effectively agreeing to neglect a portion of the population which is at high risk for contracting the HIV virus, particularly within Latin America.<sup>46</sup> Many organizations and governments within the region that worked with prostitutes for health, safety, and rights issues like education programs regarding the use of condoms, were denied funding. In addition, any groups that utilized needle or syringe exchange programs to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS were similarly denied funding by the U.S., as the Bush administration believed such efforts merely encouraged drug use, rather than prevent the spread of

disease.<sup>47</sup> Both of these high-risk populations were largely ignored by the global financial efforts within Latin America to curb the HIV/AIDS crisis as a result of the PEPFAR qualifications for aid.

As HIV/AIDS continues to spread throughout the world, threatening to cripple entire regions like Latin America, it is crucial that the international community devote all possible financial and political support to help impoverished areas with their prevention and treatment strategies. Although the U.S. took many bold steps to lead this initiative under the Bush administration, lack of careful planning and the compilation of restrictive funding measures from domestic political pressures hampered Latin America's ability to truly stem the spread of the HIV virus within the context of cultural and socioeconomic considerations. The extended consequences of such misguided aid remain to be seen, but if the past decade is any indication of the future, the women of Latin America are likely to remain the victims of their own culture's reproductive health limitations encouraged by the conservative values within American HIV/AIDS support. As former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan stated, "HIV infection and AIDS are spreading dramatically and disproportionately among women. Today, AIDS has a woman's face."<sup>48</sup> Sadly, as this HIV/AIDS crisis flourishes within Latin America, it is also evident that women's fate is also shared by homosexuals, together victims of political and cultural ignorance.

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## Irish-Americans, the Paris Peace Conference, and the League of Nations

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**D**URING THE FIRST QUARTER of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Irish nationalists rebelled against British rule and won freedom for the lower 26 of Ireland's 32 counties. Following the Easter Rising in 1916, a guerilla conflict called the Anglo-Irish War raged on and off until 1921, when British and Irish officials met and negotiated the Anglo-Irish Treaty. Historians have thoroughly chronicled the events of this struggle, which took place within Ireland itself; they have paid less attention to the international efforts of Irishmen and women living abroad. Indeed, Irish-American support for Irish independence proved vital during these years to the achievement of Irish freedom, as Irish-Americans supported nationalist organizations monetarily and, more importantly, helped bring international attention to the Anglo-Irish War in hopes of pressuring Great Britain into a settlement. Irish-Americans saw in the post-World War I peace talks a chance to bolster Irish nationalism, and embarked upon a campaign to convince American President Woodrow Wilson to bring the "Irish question" before the Paris Peace Conference. Although they failed in this immediate goal, Irish-Americans managed nonetheless to advance their cause by drawing world attention to Irish nationalism; they also affected profoundly the course of world history, as their post-Peace Conference efforts to oppose American entry into Wilson's League of Nations helped doom Wilson's

efforts. The performance of the Irish-American community in this episode is instructive not only of the effects immigrant communities may exercise over their countries of origin, but of the power of these communities to influence politics within their adopted countries and, in so doing, alter the course of world events.

Although many Irish-Americans had opposed America's entry into World War I, they recognized that America's, and for that matter Ireland's, participation in the war effort gave Irish-Americans a certain bargaining power. Irishmen and Irish-Americans had risked their lives in a conflict which Woodrow Wilson had asserted had to do with the right of small nations to choose their own form of government free from the domination of outside powers; why, reasoned Irish-Americans, should Ireland, so long dominated by Great Britain, be denied a seat at post-war peace talks? Irish politician Arthur Griffith stressed the importance of American involvement in a letter to Irish nationalist Dr. Patrick McCartan: "The people of Ireland ask the sympathy and support of the United States...in their claim for the same measure of freedom advocated for Belgium and Poland...we ask the United States to assist our country to the same freedom of choice which England claims in the case of those small nations which do not happen to be under her blighting rule."<sup>1</sup> Irish-Americans' objective was clear: procure a hearing for the Ireland at the Paris Peace Conference.

Upon the declaration of armistice in November 1918, Irish-Americans began pressuring President Wilson to use his influence with British government officials. Indeed, within hours, these efforts had begun. The radical Irish Progressive League held a mass meeting on November 12, 1918, to demand American recognition of the Irish republic and to protest the British imprisonment of Sinn Féin leaders; this proved so successful that I.P.L. leaders attempted to lead a delegation to the White House asking for favorable treatment for Ireland.<sup>2</sup> By November's end, the Friends of Irish Freedom had delivered a memorial to the White House advocating Irish independence and Joseph McLaughlin, Congressman and President of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, had sent Wilson a resolution urging Irish "self-determination" and the favorable consideration of Ireland at the Peace Conference.<sup>3</sup> Montana Senator Timothy J. Walsh sent the most effective Presidential appeals, sending Wilson several letters dealing with the Irish question, additionally expressing his own view that pre-war British capitulation to Ulster hard-liners had been "discreditable" and urging him to

"impress upon [the British government] the necessity of a speedy solution of the question of self-government for Ireland."<sup>4</sup> Should the Irish question be ignored at the Conference, Walsh assured, disgruntled Irish-American opinion would damage Anglo-American relations.<sup>5</sup>

The Irish-American press vocalized strong nationalist sentiment during this period. As early as October 1918, Irish-American newspapers called forcefully for Ireland's inclusion at the peace table, led by the Catholic weekly *America* and a series of articles by W.J.M.A. Maloney, an ex-British Army doctor. Half a million reproductions of Maloney's articles directly challenged Wilson to take a stance on the Irish question at Versailles.<sup>6</sup> "Serried cordons of armed guard may surround the conference," wrote Maloney, "...but plain people will know how to judge the President's progress... President Wilson must first seek the freedom of Ireland and all things will be added unto him."<sup>7</sup> Other Irish-American organs concurred; head of the revolutionary Irish-American organization *Clan na Gael*, John Devoy wrote in his *Gaelic American* that should President Wilson forget Ireland at Paris, he would, "never live long enough to live it down."<sup>8</sup> Referring to the violence in Ireland, the *Gaelic American* poignantly asked, "Is bayonet rule in Ireland what our boys died for in the World War?"<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the *Boston Pilot* referred to Ireland's case at the Conference as the "Great Test", and the *Irish World* wrote bluntly that, "The case of Ireland may not be excluded."<sup>10</sup>

Galvanized by nationalist sentiment, Irish-American nationalist groups sought to bring the Irish question before the American people, holding mass meetings throughout the United States. The F.O.I.F. proclaimed the second week of December 1918 "Irish Self-Determination Week", and on December 10 Boston's William Cardinal O'Connell addressed a large rally held in New York's Madison Square Garden, declaring, "Ireland, like every other country, must be free, one united Ireland, indivisible, unseparated, now and forever...Let the test of sincerity be Ireland".<sup>11</sup> The *Clan na Gael* and the Irish Progressive League both held national conferences in January 1919 to evaluate their post-war aims, and the *Clan* took the extremely important step of calling for a Third Irish Race Convention to meet in Philadelphia in February.<sup>12</sup> This convention served several important functions, cabling support to the *Dail Eireann*, designating funds for the Irish National Bureau in Washington, and launching a fund-raising campaign for Irish nationalist activities called the "victory fund."<sup>13</sup> Most importantly, it appointed a commission to see Wilson personally to discuss

Irish independence. The commission impressed Joseph P. Tumulty, Wilson's personal secretary, sufficiently that he warned Wilson of the dangers to the Democratic Party and Wilson's career should he decline to meet with it; "During the past few days," said Tumulty, "men of all races have come to me, urging me to request you to see this committee."<sup>14</sup> The meeting, which eventually took place in March, proved disastrous: Wilson later disclosed that his first impulse had been to tell the delegation to "go to hell," and he refused to make any sort of commitment regarding Irish independence, leaving the committee displeased and "on the worst of terms."<sup>15</sup>

Dissatisfied by their committee's meeting with Wilson, the officers of the Third Irish Race Convention decided to send their own delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, and chose three distinguished Irish-Americans—Frank P. Walsh, Edward F. Dunne, and Michael J. Ryan—for its composition.<sup>16</sup> Upon its departure, the Irish-American delegation announced its three goals: to obtain safe conduct to the Conference for the Irish nationalist representatives Eamon de Valera, Count George Noble Plunkett, and Arthur Griffith; to bring Ireland's case before the Peace Conference should such safe conduct be denied; and to at all junctures work towards the international recognition of the Irish republic.<sup>17</sup>

At first, it looked as though the delegation might succeed. Wilson met with the delegates and admitted to them that he had not foreseen that his promises of national self-determination would lead so many aspiring nations to plead their cases, but told them that after the issue of peace with Germany was resolved, he would communicate to British Prime Minister David Lloyd George that Irish-American opinion demanded self-government and that the Irish question had the potential to seriously adversely affect both Anglo-American and British-colonial relations.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, Wilson's private foreign affairs adviser Colonel Edward M. House spoke with Lloyd George and other British officials and informed the Irish-American delegation that while the Prime Minister would likely meet with the Irish delegation in separate talks, he would not permit them to appear before the Conference itself. Lloyd George also agreed to meet with the Irish-American delegation, but when he rescheduled this proposed meeting on two occasions, the three-man delegation set off on a fact-finding tour of Ireland, supposedly with Lloyd George's blessing.<sup>19</sup>

Lloyd George and the British government officials who at least tacitly approved this visit had understood that it was to be impartial in nature,



but while in Ireland, Walsh, Dunne, and Ryan caused an international stir, making speeches "ill-calculated to win the favor of the British Government", and in a sense ultimately dooming their mission.<sup>20</sup> Arriving on May 3, 1919, on May 5, Dunne and Ryan stated in Belfast that they were "out to get an Irish republic" and refused to "compromise" on any other form of government.<sup>21</sup> On May 9, addressing the *Dail Eireann*, all three spoke, talking of the parallels between Ireland's current struggle and the American Revolution of the 1770s and 1780s, Wilson's war aims, and America's commitment to seeing them applied to Ireland as well as eastern European nations. Throughout their two-week stay in Ireland, the delegates "pulled no punches," expressing their view of the need for Irish independence, expounding on the failures of British rule in Ireland, and elaborating on American commitment to the Irish cause.<sup>22</sup>

Both the British and Wilson reacted swiftly and severely to these statements. British cabinet official Sir Andrew Bonar Law castigated the delegates for inciting rebellion within Ireland and members of Parliament denounced their "meddling;" Lloyd George dropped any consideration of meeting with the Irish-American or Irish delegations.<sup>23</sup> Writing to Colonel House of his understanding that the delegates had gone to Ireland in a spirit of impartiality, Lloyd George fumed, "To my amazement, I now find these gentlemen, so far from investigating the Irish problem in a spirit of impartiality, announced on arrival in Dublin that they had come there to forward the disruption of the United Kingdom, and the establishment of Ireland as an independent republic."<sup>24</sup> Wilson reacted furiously. In a cable to Joseph Tumulty on June 9, he complained, "They can see nothing except their own small interest. We had practically cleared the way for the coming of the Irish Representatives to Paris when the American Commission went to Ireland and behaved in a way which so inflamed British opinion that the situation has got quite out of hand...I can at the moment see nothing further to do."<sup>25</sup> At a final interview with Walsh and Dunne on June 10, Wilson told them in plain terms, "It was you gentlemen who kicked over the apple cart."<sup>26</sup> Despite further diplomatic efforts, neither the Irish-American or Irish representatives met with Lloyd George or appeared before the Peace Conference.

The Irish-American delegation had thus failed to accomplish its stated goals. It did, however, bring the Irish question before an international audience for an extended period of time, making it a subject of discussion in both

Paris and the United States, and its efforts to bring the Irish question before the Conference were more successful than those of any similar national group which had sought such a hearing.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, Irish-American nationalists had improved their position immensely. Irish-Americans had, as author Kerby A. Miller has written, "...[challenged] Wilson to apply his vaunted democratic principles to Ireland... [set] the stage for a Wilsonian betrayal of his professed war aims which would allow Irish-Americans both to oppose his administration and give all-out support to *Sinn Féin* without risking renewed charges of treason."<sup>28</sup> This being said, Irish-American efforts having to do with the Paris talks did not cease at the Conference itself; indeed, once it became apparent that the Conference would not see the Irish delegation, Irish-Americans turned once toward American politics, betraying traditional Democratic alliances to work with Republican Congressman to prevent U.S. ratification of the Treaty of Versailles and to defeat Wilson's Democratic Party in the 1920 Presidential election.

Irish-Americans possessed well-placed political allies, as throughout the Irish-American attempt to appear before the Paris Peace Conference, men at some of the highest levels of U.S. government and society had spoken to Wilson in terms favorable to the Irish cause. Mass meetings supporting Irish independence were held throughout the U.S., and Senator James D. Phelan of California presented Wilson with a petition signed by many clergy urging the promotion of Irish self-determination.<sup>29</sup> Montana Congresswoman Jeanette Rankin had introduced a resolution on Irish independence and on March 4, 1919 the House of Representatives (216-45) and the Senate (60-1) both voted to support Ireland's presence at the Peace Conference.<sup>30</sup> By the end of 1919, Massachusetts' legislature had declared itself in favor of Irish independence and Illinois' had recognized the Irish Republic.<sup>31</sup> Even the Catholic Church became heavily involved, as bishops, archbishops, and cardinals urged Wilson to speak on Ireland's behalf.<sup>32</sup>

Against this backdrop of Congressional and otherwise powerful support, Irish-American activity hastened the Treaty's defeat before the Senate. Irish-Americans, resentful that Ireland's case had gone unheard at the Conference, unwilling to see America submit itself to a League of Nations which they believed England would dominate, and wary that ratification of the Treaty was tantamount to recognition of England's perpetual mastery over Ireland, vehemently opposed the Treaty and the League which it proposed. From the very beginning, Republican Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, leader

of Senatorial "irreconcilables" opposed to any League of Nations, recognized what Irish-American opposition to the proposed Treaty meant, writing, "You know what the Irish vote is in this country. As far as I can make out, they are bitterly opposed to the League, and the fate of the Democratic party in the Northern states is in their hands."<sup>33</sup>

Indeed, when Wilson returned from Paris and embarked on a speaking tour of the country, he faced stiff Irish-American opposition. Irish-American leader, and New York Supreme Court judge, Daniel Cohalan and his F.O.I.F. conducted the most significant campaign against the League and Treaty, allying themselves with Lodge and financing their activities through the Irish "victory fund" which had been established at February's Irish Race Convention.<sup>34</sup> Irish-Americans, especially members of the F.O.I.F., became the leading non-Congressional aggressors in the anti-Treaty movement, organizing large protest meetings throughout the country and purchasing expensive, full-page newspaper ads which proceeded and followed every stop on Wilson's September 1919 speaking tour.<sup>35</sup> Wilson himself acknowledged Irish-American opposition as the greatest obstacle to Treaty ratification, remarking in a Denver speech that, "The Hyphen is the knife that is being stuck into this document."<sup>36</sup>

Irish-Americans used pamphleteering as a major weapon in the anti-Treaty fight, and again Daniel Cohalan and the F.O.I.F. spearheaded this movement. Particularly compelling was Cohalan's 1919 treatise *The Indictment*, in which Cohalan levied many charges against Great Britain and President Wilson, among them that England remained in Ireland only for her own financial gain, that the British government had engineered famines to destroy the Irish people, that the League of Nations created two new empires, England and Japan, and that Wilson had been overmatched on the world stage. Wrote Cohalan, "[America] is utterly dissatisfied with the proposed Peace Treaty and its accompanying League of Nations...now urged by the President of the United States as something behind which he may hide with the discomfiture resulting from his encounter with the skilled diplomats of the old world."<sup>37</sup> Speaking directly to the Irish situation, Cohalan fumed, "The war, sought to bring self-determination to all the people of the earth, has the doctrine of English predetermination applied to some parts of the continent..."<sup>38</sup> Appealing directly to the American public, he concluded, "All that any friend of Ireland asks of America is that the present conditions in Ireland be studied fairly and dispassionately."<sup>39</sup>

Other Irish-American pamphlets similarly influenced American opinion. Cohalan continued his attacks on England in a second pamphlet, entitled *Freedom of the Seas*. He again targeted England, but in this pamphlet appealed mainly to American, rather than precisely *Irish-American*, interests. Writing of the Treaty's possible passage, Cohalan emphasized the importance of American opposition; "The Contest Is Here," he asserted, and went on to say that, "No greater problem has ever addressed itself to the courage and foresight and statesmanship of any group of elected freedmen."<sup>40</sup> Urging the American people and Senate to oppose the Treaty, he wrote disparagingly of the Peace Conference sessions: "The outcome of that eventful conference is one of the outstanding failures of history."<sup>41</sup> Edward F. MacSweeney similarly railed against the Peace Conference's inaction in his tract *Ireland is an American Question*. "What would Belgium say," MacSweeney wondered, "if, after these solemn promises, the Peace Conference tried to compromise by allowing Germany to hold Belgium under Dominion Home Rule? Or Poland? Or Bohemia?"<sup>42</sup> Calling on the American public directly, MacSweeney wrote, "By every test of American principle and tradition we are bound to concede to Ireland the right to determine her own government regardless of English ideas or interests."<sup>43</sup> Distributed by the F.O.I.F. and made cheaply available to the public, pamphlets such as these helped to bring greater awareness both to the anti-Treaty fight and the Irish cause in general.

In addition to these mass forms of protests, Irish-Americans registered their challenges to their treatment at the Conference and the Treaty's provisions through more official channels. When the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held public debates on Treaty ratification in August 1919, Irish-Americans attended in force. On the day the Irish-American delegation spoke, 115 Irish-Americans appeared to testify. The eight permitted to speak did so as hostile witnesses and criticized the Peace Conference's procedures as well as the conduct of the American delegates while in Paris, while other non-speakers submitted petitions, resolutions, memorials, letters, documents, and statements on the Treaty and Irish independence for the Committee's consideration.<sup>44</sup> The Senate rejected the Treaty three separate times in November 1919, and when it came before the Senate a last time in March 1920, one of the reservations passed by opponents of the Treaty in the hopes of obstructing its passage declared America's sympathy

for Irish self-determination and "with the aspirations of the Irish people for a government of their own choice."<sup>45</sup>

When the Treaty was finally defeated, both Irish-Americans and Senate Republicans rejoiced. Upon the Treaty's first defeat in November, the F.O.I.F.'s *Newsletter* carried the headline "America Saved", and Cohalan wrote to Republican Senator William Borah that its defeat was "the greatest victory for Country and Liberty since the Revolution"; on the occasion of its final defeat in March 1920, the *Irish World* proclaimed, "God Save the Republic, the greatest danger threatening it has been averted."<sup>46</sup> Senator Borah, for his part, wrote to Cohalan that he had "rendered in this fight a service which no other man has rendered."<sup>47</sup>

The Treaty's defeat did not end Irish-American anti-Democratic, anti-Wilson activity; Irish-Americans next made their voices heard in the election of 1920. Again, Cohalan and the F.O.I.F. led the Irish-American community in its vociferous opposition to Democratic Presidential candidate James M. Cox, whom Irish-Americans identified with Wilson and his defeated peace program.<sup>48</sup> Again, irrespective of traditional Democratic ties, Irish-Americans delivered a "sweeping protest vote" against Cox and the Democratic Party, giving Republican Presidential candidate Warren G. Harding astonishingly high levels of support in large Irish districts and important major cities such as New York, Boston, and Chicago.<sup>49</sup> John Devoy, ever eager to intertwine American politics, England, and Ireland, wrote publicly that Irish-American votes punished "all the Anglomaniacs, international financiers and British agents."<sup>50</sup>

This episode, beginning with the Irish-American attempt to bring the Irish case before the Paris Peace Conference, reaped some benefits for the Irish-American cause. Although Irish representatives did not appear before the Peace Conference and a satisfactory solution to the Irish question had yet to be found, the campaign for recognition at the Peace Conference, and the successful fights against Treaty ratification and during the 1920 election had gained the Irish cause and the Irish-American community largely sympathetic reactions among American and international audiences.<sup>51</sup> The unintended consequences of this Irish-American activity would be felt on the world stage in the years to come. Irish-American anti-Treaty activity proved vital to the Treaty's eventual defeat, and as such the League of Nations, deprived of legitimacy as a result of American absence, labored

during the interlude between World Wars as an organization with high symbolic value but little actual importance or power, incapable of halting the menacing advances of Germany, Italy, and Japan. Thus, Irish-Americans, in their efforts to aid their native land in her fight for freedom not only helped their own cause, but dramatically affected the course of world events.

## ENDNOTES

1. Arthur Griffith to Dr. Patrick McCartan, February 7, 1918, in *Devoy's Post Bag 1871-1928: Volume II*, ed. by William O'Brien and Desmond Ryan (Dublin: C.J. Fallon, 1948), 524.

2. Francis Carroll, *American Opinion and the Irish Question 1910-23: A study in opinion and policy*, (New York: Gill and MacMillan and St. Martin's Press, 1978), 122.

3. Carroll, *American Opinion and the Irish Question 1910-23: A study in opinion and policy*, 123.

4. Prior to World War I, English government officials had promised to put a Home Rule bill, giving Ireland a measure of self-government, through Parliament. In the face of threats from Irish Protestants from the Northern province of Ulster, who threatened to rebel should Home Rule become law, the British government had vacillated and as of 1918 Home Rule remained off the books; Carroll, *American Opinion and the Irish Question 1910-23: A study in opinion and policy*, 123.

5. Carroll, *American Opinion and the Irish Question 1910-23: A study in opinion and policy*, 123.

6. Kenneth Maxwell, "Irish-Americans and the Fight for Treaty Ratification," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (1967): 621.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Carl Wittke, *The Irish in America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press 1956), 287.

10. Maxwell, 621-622.

11. Maxwell, 622.

12. Two other, similar Irish Race Conventions had met prior to American entry into the First World War.

13. The Dail Eireann was the government proclaimed by the Easter

rebels of 1916 which was even at this early date claiming its status as Ireland's only true government; Carroll, "The American Commission on Irish Independence and the Paris Peace Conference of 1919," *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 2, no. 1 (1985): 104.

14. Carroll, "The American Commission on Irish Independence and the Paris Peace Conference of 1919," 104.

15. Ibid., 104-5.

16. Seamus P. Metress, *The American Irish and Irish Nationalism* (Lanham, MD and London: Scarecrow, 1995), 10.

17. Carroll, "The American Commission on Irish Independence and the Paris Peace Conference of 1919," 106.

18. Ibid., 84.

19. Ibid.

20. Galbraith, 198.

21. Carroll, "The American Commission on Irish Independence and the Paris Peace Conference of 1919," 109.

22. Ibid., 110.

23. John S. Galbraith, "The United States and Ireland, 1916-20," *South Atlantic Quarterly* (1947): 198.

24. Ibid., 111.

25. Maxwell, 630.

26. Ibid., 630.

27. Carroll, "The American Commission on Irish Independence and the Paris Peace Conference of 1919," 118.

28. Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 543.

29. Wittke, 287.

30. Metress, 10; Wittke, 287

31. Wittke, 287.

32. Carroll, "The American Commission on Irish Independence and the Paris Peace Conference of 1919," 103.

33. Galbraith, 199.

34. Ward, "America and the Irish Problem, 1899-1921," *Irish Historical Studies* 61, no. 16 (1968): 85.

35. Maxwell, 647; Ward, "America and the Irish Problem, 1899-1921," 85.

36. Maxwell, 635.
37. Daniel F. Cohalan, *The Indictment* (New York: Friends of Irish Freedom, 1919), 11-12.
38. Ibid., 12.
39. Ibid., 19.
40. Cohalan, *The Freedom of the Seas* (New York: Friends of Irish Freedom, 1919), 18.
41. Ibid.
42. Edward F. MacSweeney, *Ireland is an American Question*, (New York: Friends of Irish Freedom, 1919), 38.
43. Ibid, 39.
44. Carroll, "America and Irish Political Independence 1910-1933," 282; Carroll, "The American Commission on Irish Independence and the Paris Peace Conference of 1919," 116.
45. Carroll, "America and Irish Political Independence 1910-1933," 283.
46. Maxwell, 635, 641.
47. Ibid, 635.
48. John B. Duff, *The Irish in the United States* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1971), 71.
49. Duff, 71; Wittke, 291.
50. Duff, 71.
51. Ibid.

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# Territorial Integrity and Legitimacy in Democratic Serbia

## The Kosovo Problem

BETHANY CREEL

THE PROVISIONAL INSTITUTIONS of Self-Government Assembly of Kosovo declared independence on February 17, 2008, eliciting a wide range of responses: the citizens of Pristina celebrated while protesters in Belgrade set fire to the American embassy. The relationship between Serbia and Kosovo has been characterized by a wave of tension and violence since Slobodan Milosevic used the conflict with Kosovo to fan the flames of Serbian nationalism, which resulted in the subsequent ethnic cleansing of the Kosovar Albanians. Following the Kosovo War, the United Nations assumed control of Kosovo under UN Resolution 1244, which established the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).<sup>1</sup> Kosovo's recent declaration of independence poses a serious threat to Serbian democracy, as Kosovo's independence is deeply unpopular within Serbia and the government refuses to acknowledge its right to secede. By placing such a priority on maintaining the union, the Serbian government has effectively tied its legitimacy as an effective, democratic government to its ability to sustain territorial integrity.

The Balkans have been plagued by instability in the post-Cold War period. The dissolution of Yugoslavia resulted in numerous conflicts and its effects on the political climate of the region continue to be felt today. Serbian politics have been dominated by the question of independence for its once

subordinate regions. Slobodan Milosevic, former President of Serbia and of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), used violent, brutal tactics in his attempt to maintain a complete union. While Milosevic's authoritarian rule ineptly masqueraded as a democracy, the new government under the leadership of the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) coalition sought to fully realize a truly democratic Serbia. Continuing tensions between Serbia and Kosovo threaten the development of a complete union and Serbia's fragile democratization process as shifting nature of the state's identity has promoted instability. Although the political identity of Serbia has changed many times since the end of World War II, Serbia itself remains the successor to these states.<sup>2</sup> Having inherited Yugoslavia's institutions, reforms have been placed on hold while the parliaments adjust to new federal systems as they are developed.

The first challenge to Serbia's new democratic identity occurred in 2006 when Montenegro declared independence, leaving Serbia in its current configuration of the Republic of Serbia. The new constitution was approved by referendum in October of 2006.<sup>3</sup> While not supportive of the result, Serbia acknowledged the referendum, which granted Montenegro independence. The transition was peaceful and marked with little conflict. Within two years Kosovo claimed independence. In contrast to the situation with Montenegro, Kosovo's independence has not been officially recognized by Serbia. Serbia has instead called the declaration illegal and has every intention of retaining the Kosovo province as a part of a sovereign Serbia. Serbia's claims to Kosovo are complicated by the international community. The international community is split on Kosovo's independence, but among the 52 states that do recognize Kosovo are prominent Western powers such as the United Kingdom, Germany, the US, and France. Those that recognize Serbia's right to retain Kosovo as a province include Greece, Spain, and Russia. Additionally, ascension to the European Union (EU) is a top priority (and necessity) for Serbia, and sufficient progress towards democratization is a requirement for EU membership. The conflict over Kosovo threatens relations with the EU, as well as Serbia's fragile democracy.

### **The Kosovo War: Setting The Stage For Secession**

THE BATTLE FOR KOSOVO is not about the mere conquest of territory. Although the Serbian population in Kosovo is relatively small, Kosovo

is considered to be “the core of the first Serbian state and thus the cradle of Serbian national identity.”<sup>4</sup> It is not surprising that it was also the place that launched the political career of Slobodan Milosevic. Milosevic recognized the potential of Serb nationalism in Kosovo and used it to consolidate power for himself, tapping into the consciousness of the Serb public. If Serbia lost Kosovo it would lose an integral part of its cultural history.

Under Milosevic, Kosovo was stripped of any prior autonomy and the 1992 constitution placed Kosovo under the direct rule of Belgrade.<sup>5</sup> In contrast to Bosnia and Herzegovina Kosovar Albanians staged peaceful protests and did not, at that time, develop a military force to fight Yugoslav forces. The Dayton Agreements in 1995 established independence for Bosnia and Herzegovina, but not for Kosovo. As a result, many Kosovar Albanians felt they had been unfairly left out due to the *lack* of violence; because there had been no fighting there was no motivation for the international community to intervene.<sup>6</sup> It was only after the Dayton Agreements that the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) became a major player in the Kosovo conflict. The KLA utilized guerrilla tactics against the larger and better armed Yugoslav forces to some success but were at a significant disadvantage.<sup>7</sup> Instead, support for the guerrilla organization was based upon the desire to garner international attention and sympathy. The goal was to further demonize Milosevic, already unpopular in the international community despite playing part in the Dayton peace agreements, and end the oppression of the Albanian Serb population. Serbia, under the ministrations of Milosevic, responded with a shocking ferocity and hostility. Serbia had two options in Kosovo: to completely destroy the KLA and any secessionist organizations that may develop or forcibly reverse the demographics in Kosovo so that Kosovar Serbs would become the new majority population.<sup>8</sup>

Milosevic's goal was to avoid NATO intervention at all costs. He made some remarkable concessions in order to do so, including agreeing to the 1998 cease fire, limiting the number of forces in Kosovo, and allowing independent monitors to oversee the ceasefire process.<sup>9</sup> The process broke down after the Racak massacre on January 15, 1999, when Serbian police killed some 40 civilians in the town of Racak.<sup>10</sup> The brutality of the slayings in Racak shocked the international community and convinced Milosevic that international intervention was inevitable. Milosevic deployed more forces in Kosovo and began the process of mass expulsion of Kosovar Albanians, resulting in over 800,000 Kosovar Albanian

refugees.<sup>11</sup> The NATO campaign of air strikes began in March of 1999 and lasted 11 weeks; it ended following the signing of an accord that established a NATO peacekeeping force (KFOR) in Kosovo that would oversee the withdrawal of Serb forces.<sup>12</sup> The accord was enforced by UN Resolution 1244, which established a civilian interim government in Kosovo, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), and reaffirmed the "sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia."<sup>13</sup> It is this platform through which both pro-independence Kosovars and pro-Union Serbs make their arguments on the legality of Kosovo's independence.

### Nation-Building On An Unprecedented Scale

THE ROLE OF UNMIK as a nation-building tool was unprecedented. It granted the UN unlimited authority within Kosovo, and despite Resolution 1244 reaffirming Serbia's sovereignty, UNMIK was not responsible to Serbia in any manner. It was not uniformly popular within the UN, and the UN General Assembly actually bypassed the UN Security Council in order to circumvent Russia and China's veto.<sup>14</sup> Even in the process of designing the program there was the awareness that UNMIK's role could be seen as interfering with state sovereignty. Not only does the UN Charter strictly forbid this, but the Helsinki act also explicitly states the illegality of forcing border changes. UNMIK therefore did not expressly grant independence to Kosovo, though its lack of communication with Belgrade did grant the autonomous region a theoretically temporary quasi-independence.

Even though the UN temporarily fulfilled executive functions, it was understood, as explicitly stated in Resolution 1244, that Kosovo was a part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, of which Serbia is recognized as the successor. The relationship between UNMIK and FRY was fraught with tension as the administrators of UNMIK had little interest in respecting sovereignty. While Milosevic was in power UNMIK excluded Belgrade from the executive process in Kosovo.<sup>15</sup> The elections that took place in Yugoslavia in 2000 theoretically marked a turning point in Serb-Kosovar relations. It was assumed that with the triumph of the DOS and establishment of a more legitimate democracy within Serbia would be a step towards peace with Kosovo.

The reactions in Kosovo during the transition of power in Serbia were surprisingly negative. There was a large movement for Kosovar Albanians to boycott the elections.<sup>16</sup> Many Albanians believed that with Milosevic in power there existed a better chance of independence for Kosovo. One Albanian Kosovar said of the election, "If Milosevic wins, it's more easy for Kosovars, for the independence of Kosovo, because everyone knows who is Milosevic. He is the new Stalin, a war criminal, nothing else."<sup>17</sup> Elections were not formally observed by UNMIK, though authorities stated they would step in if either party made extravagant claims about the results in Kosovo. Kostunica, a candidate for the Presidential office in 2000, was critical of the international community's eagerness to declare a high level of autonomy for Kosovo, specifically citing the United States. He was a pragmatist in the sense that he understood the necessity of UN peace-keeping forces in Kosovo. Though critical of the lack of involvement of Serb authorities on the ground, he placed importance on the role of the UNMIK, saying, "there will be no door that I will not knock on in order get the Security Council finally to ask KFOR [Kosovo Force] and UNMIK consistently to implement Resolution 1244, provide security for all citizens of Kosovo and enable Serbian, Montenegrin, and other non-Albanian refugees to return."<sup>18</sup> The importance of this statement was twofold. On one level, it was meant to assure the Kosovar Albanians that Kostunica intended to respect the UNMIK, which many viewed as their best chance for independence. At the same time, however, it also maintained a context in which Yugoslavia's territory would remain intact. Resolution 1244 was a binding statement that stated that Kosovo belonged to Yugoslavia and that the international community must respect that. It was in Kostunica's best interest, and therefore Serbia's, to continue to support Resolution 1244.

Within the DOS, Kosovar independence was one of the few subjects, aside from opposition to Milosevic, which united the coalition. Sanda Ras-kovic-Ivic, head of the government's Coordinating Center for Kosovo and Vice President to Kostunica, stated, "there is no politician in Serbia who would accept a division of or independence for Kosovo, even a conditional one."<sup>19</sup> The differences between Serbian politicians did not lie in whether or not Kosovo should be independent, but rather what tone Serbia should use in maintaining territorial integrity. Kostunica was viewed as a moderate, although some hard-line politicians described him as diplomatically

naïve and criticized him for not more strongly pressing the importance of preventing Kosovo from breaking with Serbia. Raskovic-Ivic made clear what Serbia was willing to offer to Kosovo; as with any province of Serbia, Kosovar Albanians would have judicial, executive, and legislative powers – Serbia would not entertain any talks of independence.

### **Courting The International Community**

AS PRIME MINISTER, Kostunica actively courted international favor in an attempt to defend Serbia's right to maintain its territories. The status of Kosovo's future was the subject of United Nations Security Council meeting on October 24, 2005. In the days leading up to the meeting in New York, Kostunica's administration did its best to create an international democratic consensus. Kostunica visited Greece, an ally that often backed Serbia's causes; Foreign Minister Vuk Draskovic met with Chinese officials and ensured the Republic of China's support; the speaker of the Serbia and Montenegro parliament, Zoran Sami, traveled to Moscow to invite Russian support.<sup>20</sup> Kostunica received the support from the Serbian Radical Party (SRS), which previously had been critical of his policy on Kosovo, dubbing it naïve. The head of the SRS, Tomislav Nikolic, spoke with Kostunica before he left for New York. Nikolic informed the media, "I completely supported those principles and told him that he had the support of the Serbian Radical Party to persist in this and that after that, if talks are held with the Albanians on what kind of autonomy would be implemented, he should avoid shuttle diplomacy and talks with the Albanians directly."<sup>21</sup> Serbia was briefly united under the cause of defending its sovereignty in the face of the United Nations.

The consensus within the October 24<sup>th</sup> UN meeting was that the status quo was not acceptable. Kosovo would have to be reintegrated within Serbia or a viable path to independence would have to be explored. Either option presented a series of problems. Kostunica was invited to the table, without voting ability, of the Security Council meeting. He was given the opportunity to speak for Serbia. Kostunica informed the Council, "I believe that we all share the conviction that to dismember a democratic State and to change its internationally recognized borders against its will are options not to be contemplated."<sup>22</sup> With this statement Kostunica efficiently framed the problem. The succession of Kosovo was a threat to Serbian democracy. The Serbian government was not ruling out the aid of the United Nations



or other International organizations, but it was a priority to make it clear that Serbia expected its sovereignty to be respected. UN Resolution 1244 created precedence; Kosovo belonged within the territory of Serbia, and no external body should threaten that.

Kostunica was eager to show the progress Serbia had made within five short years. He made the point clear with the following statement:

A democratic government has been established in Serbia, and Serbia and Montenegro has resolved its status within the United Nations and irrevocably joined the European integration process. That has added a democratic dimension to the internationally recognized sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia and Montenegro, which were already clearly reaffirmed in June 1999. Genuine respect for human and minority rights, good-neighbourly relations and peace in the region and in the world have become the principal guidelines of my country's domestic and foreign policy. Serbia and Montenegro is increasingly affirming itself as a bulwark of basic democratic values both within its territory and in the region.<sup>23</sup>

The government of Serbia was making democratic progress. Positive relations with the United Nations and acceptance into the EU membership process showed that a democratic Serbia was possible and currently developing. The implication was obvious: if the United Nations passed a resolution supporting Kosovo's independence, it would be a direct threat to that process. It would be a punishment for a state that did not deserve it.

The Serbian government inherited a contentious relationship with Kosovo from Milosevic and it was Kostunica's assertion that Serbia was being punished for crimes its current government did not commit. The tense relationship between Kosovo and Serbia did present a problem for continued unification. The most pressing, as far as the Serbian government was concerned, was the status of Kosovar Serbs. Kosovo presents a strange case of displacement. The Yugoslav forces removed 90 percent, approximately 1.5 million, of the Kosovar Albanian population in the process of ethnic cleansing.<sup>24</sup> In mid-1999 NATO forces ensured the safe return of the Albanian refugees; this process displaced some 250,000 Serbs and other non-Albanian citizens.<sup>25</sup> The population of displaced persons has essentially switched in the past decade. Furthermore, violence against non-Albanian minorities was an increasingly dire concern. In a period of three days

Albanian extremists burned 35 monasteries and churches and 800 private homes of Serbs.<sup>26</sup> It was the opinion of Serbian leaders that granting independence would unjustly reward and encourage such behavior. One such Serbian said of Kosovo's bid for independence:

Independence is being conferred on those who, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, created Serbian ghettos in Europe -- ghettos girdled with barbed wire and surrounded with cannon barrels and soldiers armed to the teeth. A reward is being bestowed on those who have taken part in the segregation of Serbs and who deny them freedom of movement and force them to live in darkness and in constant fear for their lives.<sup>27</sup>

There existed a strong belief within the Serbian population that Kosovar independence would represent a sharp injustice against a democratic state. If the International Community recognized and aided Kosovo, it would de-legitimize the new Serbian government. The government would have proven incapable of protecting its citizens, those displaced and oppressed Kosovar Serbs, and incapable of maintaining territorial integrity.

### The Ahtisaari Plan

DESPITE THE MANY PROTESTS of the Serbian government, progress towards independence has incrementally moved forward each year. In 2006, the United Nations appointed former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari to preside over talks of the status of Kosovo. Both sides were diametrically opposed and Ahtisaari recognized this. It was his opinion that the limbo was a threat to Kosovo's democratization and the best course of action would be to ensure independence for the province. Furthermore, Ahtisaari posited that it was the responsibility of the International Community to oversee the independence process. This is in direct opposition to the government of Serbia's position which by now was very clear – it was considered not an international issue and any interference on the part of the international community in this respect would be infringing on the rights of a sovereign state. Ahtisaari concluded his proposal by stating:

Kosovo is a unique case that demands a unique solution. It does not create a precedent for other unresolved conflicts. In unanimously

adopting resolution 1244 (1999), the Security Council responded to Milosevic's actions in Kosovo by denying Serbia a role in its governance, placing Kosovo under temporary United Nations administration and envisaging a political process designed to determine Kosovo's future. The combination of these factors makes Kosovo's circumstances extraordinary.<sup>28</sup>

It is interesting that he would use resolution 1244 in order to justify the proposal, considering its place in the arguments from the Serbian government against the independence movement.

The plan was controversial from its inception. A majority of UN members supported independence for Kosovo – including the United States. Russia, however, remained dubious and reaffirmed its support for Serbia, stating concerns over what the plan meant for the future of sovereignty. Serbia was clearly against the plan. Officials noted concerns that if the plan did fail it could mean a resurgence of violence against Serbs in Kosovo.<sup>29</sup> There was also a fear that it would threaten the stability of the Balkans. The precedent was, according to officials such as Kostunica, a dangerous one for the future of international law. Xavier Heredu of the Spanish paper *El Periódico* noted of the disagreement:

And the question that we should now address to the USA and the European Union is the following: What would you say, you who have recognized the independence of a region of Serbia - a region without national flag or anthem, without historical tradition as a nation - if we, Catalonians, were to declare independence? We DO have a historical tradition, we have the oldest national anthem in Europe, we have an ancient national flag, our own language and culture. Would you support us in the same way you supported Kosovo?<sup>30</sup>

Those who supported the proposal were unable to gain Russia's support. The resolution crafted to implement Ahtisaari's proposal failed on July 20, 2007.<sup>31</sup>

### Kosovo Claims Independence; Serbia Cries Foul

THE FAILURE TO PASS the proposal was one misstep for Kosovo, but did not hinder its determination to declare independence. The Serbian

parliamentary elections in early 2008 were dominated by the Kosovo problem. Kosovo was expected to declare independence within the month and many looked to the elections to gauge public response. Incumbent President Tadic ran on a pro-European platform against Tomislav Nikolic of the SRS party, whose campaign had a decidedly nationalist tone. Tadic won reelection. The fact that a moderate pro-European candidate managed to win the election represented a step away from the nationalism that continues to dominate Serbian politics. The win, however, was not as decisive as many would have liked. Tadic received just over 50 percent of the vote, while his opponent obtained 47 percent.<sup>32</sup> This polarization among the electorate manifested itself in the government. In the days following the presidential election the coalition government failed. Tension between President Tadic and Prime Minister Kostunica related to differing opinions on the European Union led to public sniping at one another. Despite Kostunica's party being in coalition with Tadic's DS party, Kostunica did not endorse Tadic for president. The conflict interrupted the ability for the parliament to govern, prompting Tadic's decision to dissolve the government and hold parliamentary elections in May.<sup>33</sup> Tadic's party did not receive enough votes to obtain a majority within the parliament. The DS managed to obtain 38 percent of the vote and 103 seats, while SRS received 29 percent and 77 seats.<sup>34</sup>

On February 17, 2008, the assembly of Kosovo declared independence from Serbia.<sup>35</sup> Nations rushed to recognize Kosovo as an independent state. There are currently 52 countries that openly acknowledge Kosovo's independence, despite protests from Serbia. Countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Germany have expressed support for Kosovo, while others, such as Russia, China, Spain, and India, which all have regions with independence movements, have voiced concern over the nature of the problem.<sup>36</sup> In an op-ed piece for the *New York Times*, Vuk Jeremic, foreign minister of Serbia, stated exactly why the recognition of Kosovo was a problem:

Recognizing the unilateral declaration of Kosovo's independence from Serbia legitimizes the doctrine of imposing solutions to ethnic conflicts. It legitimizes the act of unilateral secession by a provincial or other non-state actor. It transforms the right to self-determination into an avowed right to

independence. It legitimizes the forced partition of internationally recognized, sovereign states.<sup>37</sup>

### The Disruption Of EU-Serbian Relations

SERBIA HAS NOT RECOGNIZED Kosovo as an independent state, nor is it likely to do so in the near future. This presents a problem for Serbia's EU aspirations. Serbia, which has enjoyed potential candidate status since June 2000, following the ousting of Milosevic, was displeased when many of the EU states recognized Kosovo's declaration of independence.<sup>38</sup> The overwhelming majority of EU members, 22 of 27, recognize Kosovo as independent, the basis of the problem for Serbia. Some portions of Serbian political would rather cut ties with the EU then work with an organization that does not recognize its sovereignty.

There has been a clear movement to aid Kosovo in stability and economic development. The European Council of 2007 created an outline for what the European Union's role in Kosovo would be. Following the basic plot of the Ahtisaari plan, the EU would increasingly take over the role the UN has been providing in Kosovo; the General Affairs and External Relations Council established EULEX, a rule of law mission with the goals of mentoring, advising and monitoring that also provided some executive functions.<sup>39</sup>

The Kosovo problem has split the government between nationalists, such as Kostunica, and moderates, such as the leader of the Democratic Party, President Boris Tadic. Kostunica's more radical party demanded that Serbia turn its back on the European Union if such flagship countries as the UK and France do not retract their support for Kosovo.<sup>40</sup> In May 2007, Kostunica told the press, "The institutions and citizens of *Serbia* demand an answer to the essential question -- with what borders does the EU recognize *Serbia*? Any agreement between *Serbia* and the EU envisages both sides being familiar with *Serbia's* borders."<sup>41</sup> Under the radical coalition parties' influence, Serbia retracted its ambassadors from countries that supported Kosovo's independence, including key EU member states.<sup>42</sup> Tadic does not differ in the desire for the EU to recognize the illegality of Kosovo's declaration but does acknowledge the need for Serbia to continue its path towards

EU membership. Tadic said of the problem, "A *Serbia* not headed for the EU will get poorer, have more unemployed people and a smaller budget. That kind of *Serbia* is unable to defend *Kosovo* and Metohija."<sup>43</sup>

### Territorial Integrity and Legitimacy- Serbia's Future

SERBIA'S PRO-EUROPE government is carefully trying to pursue both goals: EU membership and the recognition of Serbia as sovereign over Kosovo. In 2008, President Tadic announced Serbia's intention to bring the case of Kosovo to the International Court of Justice with the intention to sue the states that recognized Kosovo's independence. Foreign Minister Vak characterized Kosovo's declaration of independence in a press release as "an ethnically motivated attempt at secession from the internationally recognized State, in defiance of the Security Council, and an illegal act."<sup>44</sup> Serbia hopes to once and for all create a global consensus that Kosovo's declaration and the recognition by other states was illegal and violated international law.

The process of democratization in Serbia has been dominated by territorial concerns. The influence of the international community exacerbated an already difficult situation. The threat to Serbia's legitimacy hinders the development of democracy and trust the people have for the government. Kosovo's bid for independence has negatively impacted the development of democracy within Serbia, and the continuing political conflict has made it difficult for parties to establish efficient ruling coalitions. Similarly, Serbia's goal of EU ascension has been prioritized for the state's future. If EU and Serbia cannot come to a consensus on Kosovo's status, Serbia's position as a potential member state is in jeopardy. As the EU has played a major role in guiding Serbia's progress the loss of this relationship would be devastating not only for Serbia, but for the region. The legality of Kosovo's declaration is currently being debated among the highest institutions of the international community. It is, however, clear that Serbia has pinned its legitimacy as a democracy to its ability to maintain territorial integrity and any change to its borders without its express support damages its chances for positive democratic progress.

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## Twisting the Odds

The Judenrat and Jewish Survival in the Vilna Ghetto

GILLIAN BOURASSA

PRIOR TO THE HOLOCAUST, Vilna was “the center of Jewish life in the Diaspora” and was often called the “Jerusalem of Lithuania” because the city was the home to great Talmud scholars and many Jewish institutions, both religious and secular. Vilna boasted a population from many ethnic backgrounds, had a museum holding a variety of books, art, and antique Torah scrolls, was lauded by poets, and was the center of the Haskalah movement.<sup>1</sup> Yitzhak Arad, one of the most important historians of the Holocaust in German-occupied Lithuania, estimated that between 203,000 and 207,000 Jews lived in Lithuania, while Lester Eckman and Chaim Lazar estimated a Jewish population in Vilna of 60,000 to 70,000 when the Germans entered Lithuania in 1941. These large populations existed in spite of the fact that some had been deported into the interior of the Soviet Union or had attempted to flee Lithuania before the German invasion.<sup>2</sup> Within a few months of the German occupation, Jewish ghettos were created in the major Lithuanian cities and housed the country’s Jews until 1943, when the ghettos were liquidated and the Jews were deported to camps before Soviet troops pushed the Germans out of Lithuania in July 1944.<sup>3</sup> Once it was established, the Vilna ghetto benefited from

the unique combination of good fortune and an effective internal government; as a result, the Judenrat helped ghetto residents resist the effects of German occupation and create a vibrant society characterized by a high degree of normalcy in spite of mass murders and the indecencies of ghetto life.

The Judenrat was successful in promoting a variety of cultural and social programs, but underlying these magnificent elements of life in the Vilna ghetto was the same profound torment that was characteristic of ghetto life. Even though the residents of the ghetto were largely able to overcome these horrors, they still lived with memories of the first months of German occupation. Part of the purpose of the Vilna ghetto was that it was a staging area for further mass killings, and Jewish leaders sought to cooperate with the Germans in order to ensure the survival of as many people as possible.<sup>4</sup> Most residents of the ghetto agreed that the survival of the majority of the population was the goal, even if “weaker” members of the community had to be killed.<sup>5</sup> Extermination of Jews began once the Germans entered Lithuania, which was the only country, aside from Latvia, to see eighty percent of its Jewish population perish at the hands of the Einsatzgruppen and Lithuanian Gentiles by the end of 1941.<sup>6</sup> The liquidation of Lithuania’s Jews was rapid because of the importance of Lithuania to larger German territorial and military objectives. Lithuania likely would have been a German colony in post-war Europe, making the liquidation of Lithuania’s Jews a high priority for the Nazi occupiers.<sup>7</sup> Military success in Russia also increased the rate of murder, as Germans foresaw an easy victory and wanted to complete the extermination of Jews before the war ended and global public opinion complicated or even frustrated German objectives.<sup>8</sup>

Lithuanian Gentiles were instrumental in accomplishing these goals. Traditional anti-Semitism increased during the period of Soviet rule in Lithuania, which immediately preceded German occupation; Lithuanians blamed Jews for Soviet rule and identified them with Communism, as Jews were disproportionately employed by the occupying Soviet government.<sup>9</sup> Those Lithuanians who did choose to participate in extermination were volunteers and were not forced to commit murder by German occupiers, even though 150 Lithuanians were appointed to assist the Germans in June 1941 and those who murdered Jews were supervised by the German police.<sup>10</sup> Because so few Germans held administrative positions in occupied Lithuania, Arūnas Bubnys concluded that the genocide

would not have been possible without the assistance of the Lithuanians who sought to accomplish their own objectives at the expense of Lithuania's vast Jewish population.<sup>11</sup>

Mass killings in Lithuania began when the Einsatzkommando 9 entered Lithuania in July of 1941.<sup>12</sup> In contrast to other Nazi-occupied countries, killings began as soon as Germans occupied Lithuania, and Lithuanian Jews were killed close to their homes instead of being deported and then killed.<sup>13</sup> These killings were preceded by two weeks of pogroms instigated by Lithuanians, beginning in Kovno and then spreading to other cities, followed by Einsatzgruppen operations.<sup>14</sup> The Germans assumed control of Lithuania on July 2, reorganized Lithuanian political police into an auxiliary unit of the Einsatzkommando and began murdering Jews, beginning with "the intelligentsia, political activists, and wealthy Jews." The Germans established a killing site at Ponary, in the forests five miles southwest of Vilna; men between the ages of twenty and fifty were marched to Ponary after having been told they were reporting for labor duty and were killed after they surrendered their clothing to Lithuanians aiding the Einsatzkommando.<sup>15</sup> Gestapo trucks also drove around Vilna capturing Jews and murdering them at a rate of five hundred per day, and by July 20, 5,000 Jews had been murdered and 460,000 rubles and a variety of other goods had been confiscated.<sup>16</sup> By August, Jews had been arrested and put into camps, and the Germans did not distinguish among victims, resulting in the murders of 15,000 men and 1,000 women by the beginning of September 1941.<sup>17</sup> This included the murders of 8,000 people between August 31 and September 2, which began when two Lithuanians fired shots on a Jewish house in Vilna and claimed that Jews fired on the square. German soldiers then entered the house and beat two Jewish men before shooting them, while Lithuanian auxiliaries began arresting Jews for transport to Ponary to make room for those who would be brought to the ghetto.<sup>18</sup>

The Vilna ghetto itself was established in the midst of these mass killings. In early August 1941, Vilna's commissioner Hans Hingst and his assistant Franz Mruerin chose the traditional Jewish quarter in the center of Vilna as the location for the ghetto.<sup>19</sup> Formal establishment of the ghettos occurred on September 6 when the Nazis forced Jews into the ghetto; the selection of Saturday as the day when the Jews would be required to move was deliberately chosen as an "expression of contempt" for the Jewish Sabbath.<sup>20</sup> The Nazis established two ghettos, one for those who would be able

to work as forced laborers, including doctors, engineers, and skilled laborers, and the other as a holding area for those who would be eventually killed in addition to the group that was held in prison before being murdered at Ponary.<sup>21</sup> In the process of relocating Jews to the ghetto, Lithuanian police murdered 7,000 to 10,000 Jews assigned to the second ghetto, and by the end of that weekend, 30,000 people had been brought to the first ghetto, meeting the Nazis' goal of killing as many people and capturing as many skilled workers as possible.<sup>22</sup> Within ten days of the establishment of the ghetto, 4,605 people had been killed in two massacres, one on September 12 and the other on September 17, designed to begin the process of eliminating the Jews not selected as forced laborers.<sup>23</sup>

This process continued into October, as 1,700 Jews were chosen on October 1 for extermination from each ghetto, and despite this group's attempt to resist by refusing to march to Ponary, the second ghetto was finally liquidated within the next three weeks.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, Germans issued "yellow certificates" to skilled workers in the first ghetto, which allowed these Jews to register themselves and three members of their families, temporarily protecting them from extermination. By October 24, the Germans forced the Jews to make their selections, and all other Jews in the first ghetto were brought to the second ghetto for extermination.<sup>25</sup> In response to these murders, the Judenrat sought to maintain order within the walls of the ghetto in hopes that this would persuade the Germans not to liquidate the ghetto; for this reason, Jewish authorities enforced German regulations.<sup>26</sup> Jews were required to wear a variety of badges, the specifics of which changed constantly "as an added harassment to keep the Jews in a perpetual state of confusion, tension, and anxiety," and Jews were also required to observe curfews, were not allowed to own a telephone, and were restricted in their ability to purchase food and use public transportation and other public spaces.<sup>27</sup> In addition to maintaining order and observing regulations, Jewish survival was also determined by the possession of work permits, whose requirements were also in constant, intentional flux, which forced Jews to perpetually apply for permits.<sup>28</sup>

Within the first six to seven months of German occupation of Lithuania, three-quarters of Lithuania's Jews were murdered.<sup>29</sup> The Einsatzkommando listed 15,000 Jewish workers and their families alive in Vilna on December 1, 1941,<sup>30</sup> but exact estimates vary among scholars. Some list that 35,000 were murdered between June 24 and September 6, and by the



end of 1941, 15,000 more were murdered and 12,000 remained in the ghetto, soon to be supplemented by the arrival of 8,000 deported Jews.<sup>31</sup> Yitzhak Arad estimated that between 7,000 and 8,000 Jews were killed in the pogroms and a total of between 160,000 and 164,000 Jews were murdered throughout Lithuania, leaving 43,000 alive, 20,000 of whom were in the Vilna ghetto, while Dina Porat estimated that out of 60,000 Jews living in Vilna at the beginning of 1941, only 19,000 remained alive at year's end.<sup>32</sup> This group of 19,000 was the population that embarked on the quest led by the Judenrat to create institutions that would allow the Jewish residents of the ghetto to establish a sense of normalcy in spite of continued German atrocities.

Several characteristics of Vilna made this ghetto unique among the Lithuanian ghettos and worked to the advantage of the ghetto's residents. In Vilna, the Lithuanian population was a minority, and it did not want to draw attention to ethnic divisions, especially the Belarusian and Polish communities. The Lithuanians also wanted to appear as if they had control over an orderly city, and as a result, large-scale pogroms, extremely violent riots, did not happen in Vilna as they did in other Lithuanian cities. Pogroms would have thwarted their goal of maintaining order, even though most Lithuanians preferred Nazi to Soviet rule.<sup>33</sup> Polish and Lithuanian Gentiles in other parts of Lithuania rounded up Jews and delivered them to the Nazis, whereas the Gentile populations around Vilna did not aid the Germans in mass murder as their counterparts in other cities did.<sup>34</sup> Within the ghetto itself, egalitarianism characterized relationships among Jews because most pre-war distinctions and social divisions vanished once Jews were relocated to the ghetto.<sup>35</sup> The ghetto's population was younger (including young and middle-aged people) and rather politicized, and food was more available to Vilna's residents than it was to residents of other ghettos.<sup>36</sup> Residents were also able to survive in the ghetto because Vilna's inheritance of a long medical tradition allowed them to create an extensive medical system. Jewish doctors survived the initial pogroms, were given immunity through the efforts of a German medical officer with ties to Vilna's Jewish doctors, and were skilled in anticipating medical issues.<sup>37</sup> Vilna's status as a center of Jewish culture also survived early mass murders, and this tradition laid the foundation for a vibrant cultural life; various cultural activities represented the residents' ability to maintain this heritage and their "attempts to live meaningfully as long as possible."<sup>38</sup>

The organization at the head of these developments was the Vilna Judenrat, which was established as the Germans created the Lithuanian ghettos in September 1941. Just as it took some time for the Germans to settle the Jewish population chosen for survival in the ghetto, it took some time for the Judenrat to be fully established. Before the formation of what would be the permanent Jewish Council, Soviet political repression and German murders reduced the number of Jewish leaders in Lithuania, and most of the existing Jewish council in Vilna was murdered during the formation of the ghetto.<sup>39</sup> Because of these murders, there was no Judenrat in place to help oversee the formation of the ghetto, and Holocaust historian Dina Porat wrote that this exacerbated the chaos of the moment and allowed the Germans to continue mass murders.<sup>40</sup> The Germans appointed Anatol Fried chair of the next council, and he served with four others until the Germans appointed Jacob Gens to the position of "Ghetto Representative." Gens then appointed Salk Dessler his deputy and relied on the police and the underground to enforce his power as the chair of the Judenrat until he was killed in September 1943 during the liquidation of the ghetto.<sup>41</sup> The differences between Fried and Gens were stark: Fried was vain, selfish, and unconcerned about the welfare of the Jewish community he governed, and ghetto residents referred to his council as "Judenverrat," or Jewish traitors. Gens, on the other hand, had served as an officer in the Lithuanian army and even though his marriage to a Lithuanian could have allowed him to escape from the ghetto, he did not forfeit the ghetto experience because he hoped to save the Jewish population from the Germans.<sup>42</sup>

Like those in other ghettos, the Vilna Judenrat had vast power in governing the ghetto, including the authority to increase bread production and food redistribution in order to combat starvation, to establish other institutions to maintain the physical and mental health of ghetto residents, to mediate small disagreements, hand down death sentences, deport people, or hand people over to the Germans.<sup>43</sup> In addition to the Judenrat, the Vilna ghetto featured a notable police system, which the Germans allowed to be established in February 1942 and was the only legal authority before the rest of the judicial system was established.<sup>44</sup> The police actively wielded its own power (to the approval of the German occupiers), maintained its jurisdiction over people who attempted to escape the ghetto or who had been arrested by the Germans outside of the ghetto, and regularly handed people over to the Germans for extermination.<sup>45</sup> Vilna's Jews hated the

Jewish police because the police did not necessarily act on German orders, and Porat believed that the presence of a separate legal staff formed by lawyers and law students demonstrated public distrust in the Judenrat and its justice system.<sup>46</sup>

The police force was just one element of the larger justice system the Judenrat established. Dina Porat, whose own research into the judiciaries of Lithuania's ghettos took advantage of the opening of Soviet archives, quoted one scholar who believed that the Jews had no choice but to create their own justice system once they were isolated in the ghetto.<sup>47</sup> Porat believed the justice system was "an affirmation of the values of the past," especially "universal and Jewish values" and that obedience to this legal system reflected the relationship between ghetto residents and the Judenrat.<sup>48</sup> The judiciary had two levels of courts as well as judges and lawyers to represent both sides, and the Judenrat served as the appeals court for the ghetto. The judiciary's power was derived from the Judenrat and the police, which had their own jurisdiction.<sup>49</sup> The crime rate was low in the Lithuanian ghettos in general, and crimes were usually not violent; in Vilna during the first half of 1942, 172 people faced trial and 183 people were brought before magistrates.<sup>50</sup> Sentences were commonly only short-term imprisonments, fines, or warnings, but people could be imprisoned for breaking sanitation regulations or could be incarcerated without a trial for anywhere from a few hours to a few days.<sup>51</sup> The most common crime in early 1942 was disturbing the peace, followed by theft, damaging property, and verbal assault, while crimes such as murder and robbery were rare and death sentences even rarer.<sup>52</sup>

In addition to its responsibility in maintaining law and order, the Judenrat worked to combat one of the greatest challenges of ghetto life: sanitation and disease. The ghetto faced overcrowding, poor sanitation and nutrition, lack of clothing and heat, and the mortality rate was probably higher than thirty deaths per thousand people in 1942. Additionally, the ghetto also had to contend with the psychological issues that accompanied relocation.<sup>53</sup> In response to these problems and to common sanitation issues such as the overuse of toilets and an abundance of garbage and lice, the Judenrat created a bureaucracy to improve conditions.<sup>54</sup> The Judenrat also sponsored an education campaign to improve sanitation and hygiene, featuring posters, leaflets, cleanliness competitions, a cleaning week, and a "trial of the louse" to raise awareness about typhus, and in late 1941, a task force of women was appointed to clean the public spaces of the ghetto.<sup>55</sup> Jews

who entered the ghetto were settled in camps before they joined the rest of the population, where they were provided with meals and medical care while the Judenrat monitored fuel and sanitation.<sup>56</sup> Within the ghetto, the Sanitary-Epidemiological Section regulated food quality and production, and in September 1942, there was an increase in inspections of "nutrition agencies" in response to an increase in the number of cases of stomach and intestinal diseases.<sup>57</sup> The Sanitary Police frequently inspected the ghetto and took strict action when infectious diseases did appear, and as a result, sanitation improved, lice disappeared, and garbage became less of a concern; by April 1943, the ghetto police had assumed jurisdiction over enforcing these regulations.<sup>58</sup>

As a part of this strict sanitation system, extensive regulations controlled hygiene. The government established two baths, the first in December 1941 and the second in April 1942, provided bath tickets, and, in September 1942, issued a mandate that everyone visit the baths or forfeit their bread cards for the next month. As a result, operation of the baths increased as the Health Department continued to ensure that everyone made regular visits.<sup>59</sup> The first laundry opened in the ghetto in February 1942 to launder hospital linens, but it soon expanded to launder civilian clothing. Because it was too small to process laundry quickly and operated more than was expected, in September 1942 the Health Department began the procedure to open a new laundry.<sup>60</sup> A disinfection chamber opened in December 1941, and by mid-1942, six teahouses provided hot water to ghetto residents; later that year, an influx of workers from outside labor camps prompted the establishment of quarantine facilities in order to ensure that these workers did not bring diseases into the ghetto.<sup>61</sup>

The government also worked diligently to prevent infectious diseases. In September 1942, the Vaccination Center distributed vitamins and vaccinated five hundred people who handled food against typhus, and there was a program of compulsory vaccinations throughout the ghetto.<sup>62</sup> The Sanitation-Epidemiology Department fought scabies and tuberculosis, and by September 1942, it had eradicated scabies, reducing the workload for the Skin Diseases Center. The department then turned its attention to fighting diphtheria and scarlet fever, an outbreak of which had caused the closure of day care centers, the library, sport club, and children's club.<sup>63</sup> Solon Beinfeld believed the epidemiological department was crucial in preventing outbreaks that would wipe out ghetto residents and possibly provoke the

Germans to liquidate the ghetto, and even though Vilna was initially as overcrowded, dirty, and starved as other ghettos, the department's efforts meant that there were no major epidemics or any deaths from starvation.<sup>64</sup>

In addition to the sanitation regulations, the Vilna Judenrat supported a variety of health care facilities and social services. By the middle of 1942, the hospital had 237 beds and a separate building for tuberculosis patients, and in the first year of the ghetto, an average of 205 patients was treated in the hospital each day.<sup>65</sup> The surgical department responded primarily to work-related injuries, and the gynecological ward primarily performed abortions because the Germans had forbidden Jewish births; however, those who worked in the ward often altered birth records and hid infants while ghetto authorities worked to prevent illegal pregnancies.<sup>66</sup> The ghetto also had a clinic that opened immediately after the ghetto was established and treated three to four hundred people per day for minimal fees that went into the Judenrat treasury.<sup>67</sup> The Social Welfare Department often subsidized these fees, covering the treatment of 265 patients and 760 prescriptions in April 1943.<sup>68</sup>

The Judenrat was able to provide pharmaceuticals, even though it was more complicated to do so than to provide medical care. Pharmacists did not survive the initial mass murders in large numbers and the pharmacy was just outside the borders of the ghetto, so medication was limited to what was already inside the ghetto. Those pharmacists who did survive formed a Pharmacists' Circle, and most drugs were either legally imported or produced within the ghetto.<sup>69</sup> Doctors worked with the hospital to provide appropriate care for patients, and in September 1942, both the hospital and the clinic were under renovation in preparation for winter.<sup>70</sup>

Childcare was another important social service the Judenrat supported. A Day Care Center opened on September 1, 1942, for children between six months and six years of age to care for children of widowed, working mothers at a cost of 1.5RM per day, which was usually covered by the Department of Social Welfare.<sup>71</sup> The Day Care provided all meals for the children, emphasized education and cleanliness, and employed nurses who reached out to the children's homes primarily to examine family members for infectious diseases.<sup>72</sup> The School Medical Center addressed the medical needs of children enrolled in school and examined children before they were enrolled in school or work in order to ensure that all the children who survived the ghetto would be physically and mentally healthy.<sup>73</sup> By April 1943,

the Judenrat expanded the ghetto's Yelodim, which were places for orphans to live and receive educational and vocational training.<sup>74</sup> The government also provided a variety of other social services. People were provided with meals, supplies (often smuggled into the ghetto by the Cemetery Department in returning hearses), rent assistance, and cash assistance, but by April 1943, the number of people receiving aid increased because more people applied for lower rents, more people entered the ghetto, and the level of poverty among ghetto residents had increased.<sup>75</sup>

Just as residents of the Vilna ghetto communicated their hopes for survival and liberation through their adherence to sanitation regulations and their dedication to the ghetto's various social services, they also drew upon their previous lives and cultural activities to create works in a multitude of art forms. The Judenrat supported these endeavors that transcended Nazi occupiers' attempts at dehumanization and overtly expressed the ghetto residents' commitment to survival. Between early 1942 and the summer of 1943, the Judenrat established numerous social, cultural, and educational organizations, including two schools and a university, a theater, a concert series, and a lecture series.<sup>76</sup> Even though few of these cultural events were free of charge, in March of 1942, over 2,000 people took part in one of the six or seven events held each Sunday.<sup>77</sup> At this early stage, the sports division had 415 members in twenty-two different programs and sponsored games each Sunday, and each school held physical education classes on grounds designated for sports events.<sup>78</sup> On March 29, 1942, an art exhibit opened that featured the works of noted and "young" artists; it ran until April 4, and hundreds of people visited each day it was open, including teachers and their classes.<sup>79</sup> Lectures called Workers' Assemblies were also held each Sunday, and the Children's and Youth Club, History Circle, and Literary Circle all held events.<sup>80</sup> Schools began operating in the ghetto in late 1941, and by March 1943, there were 1,700 students enrolled.<sup>81</sup> Teachers emphasized "Jewish religious, cultural, and moral survival," and special events were held in the schools, including celebrations for the holiday of Purim.<sup>82</sup>

Not only did these programs thrive in the ghetto, literary culture also flourished. The Organization of Artists and Writers began meeting in February 1942 in order to stimulate creativity and provide work for its members, and it organized literary events, lectures, and discussions in addition to providing material assistance to stimulate creative endeavors.<sup>83</sup> The Literary Association applied for honoraria from the Culture Department for its

members, and several authors worked on books about the ghetto.<sup>84</sup> One important author of the Vilna ghetto was Abraham Sutzkever, who began writing just after the Nazis occupied Lithuania and whose works reflect the endurance of “a sense of beauty and aesthetic values” despite the horrors of life under German rule in the ghetto.<sup>85</sup> Sutzkever held a poetry reading for the Teachers’ Association on March 12, 1942, and he later escaped the ghetto and joined the Partisan resistance forces.<sup>86</sup> B’rit Ivrit, the Hebrew-speaking Federation, encouraged the study of Hebrew language and culture, and the ghetto library loaned 13,500 books to both adults and children during March 1942 and had almost 2,600 members by the end of that month, all of whom were subject to trial and fines by the ghetto court if they failed to return their books.<sup>87</sup>

There was also a surprising richness of music and theater produced by the ghetto’s residents. The symphony orchestra, directed by Wolf Dormashkin, performed its first four concerts in March 1942, beginning with a performance of works by Beethoven, Chopin, and Tchaikovsky on March 13. The orchestra originally had twenty members and doubled in size by 1943, by which time it had given 35 concerts of symphonic and jazz works.<sup>88</sup> The musicians played on instruments that had been smuggled into the ghetto through the sewers or in pieces and then reassembled, and many musicians buried their instruments to protect them from the Germans.<sup>89</sup> A music school established by Avraham Slep and Tamara Girshovitsh offered classes in piano, voice, violin, and music theory to about one hundred students and regularly held concerts.<sup>90</sup> Additionally, several choral and chamber groups performed, including a student choir directed by Ya’akov Gershteyn, a Hebrew choir also directed by Dormashkin, the Little Hebrew Choral Society, and a choir directed by B’rit Ivrit that performed songs with Jewish and Zionist roots.<sup>91</sup>

Popular songs were more indicative than classical music of both the vibrant cultural life and of the hardships ghetto residents experienced. These songs addressed the horrors of ghetto life, including hunger, labor, humiliation, and overcrowding, and they revealed the human need “to create, to sing, and even laugh” in the midst of suffering.<sup>92</sup> One song called “Es iz geven a zumertog” (“It was a Summer’s Day”) described the horrors of the creation of the ghetto and mass murders at Ponary and expressed a belief that the world had deceived the Jewish people and that Jews were unable to protect themselves. The fact that this song appears in many survivors’

memoirs indicates that it was a popular song in the ghetto.<sup>93</sup> These songs often used the image of animals being led to a slaughter and drew on the suffering of Jews in the ghetto in the context of the history of Jewish suffering, including Biblical events and pogroms under the tsar.<sup>94</sup> Popular songs were often written in the first person plural to emphasize the community's voice and group suffering and to comfort people who might have believed they suffered alone.<sup>95</sup>

These songs often overtly expressed hopes of liberation. One song written in response to the Soviet bombing of Vilna in March 1942 addressed the bombs that fell around Vilna and expressed how the ghetto residents "waited eagerly" for them because they meant liberation and how "Our heart longs so for revenge" for what they as a community had suffered.<sup>96</sup> Many popular songs called people to resistance and were written by members of the resistance movement. Very few of these texts survive, but the ones that have reflect the spirit of resistance within the ghetto.<sup>97</sup> One marching song was sung at all gatherings of the Youth Club and called all people to join their quest for freedom and "to be the children/Of a new free generation."<sup>98</sup> These songs, written by people such as Hirsh Glik and Shmerke Kaczerginski, contain themes of bravery, the strength of the Jewish community, vengeance, and violence, and were often sung outside of the ghetto.<sup>99</sup> These songs were also more encouraging than songs like "It was a Summer's Day," used Soviet rather than Yiddish melodies, and linked the political views of the partisans to Soviet communism.<sup>100</sup>

Like music, ghetto theater was both prolific and connected to the resistance movement's expression of hope through art. The theater emerged in 1942, with the first of four performances of the play "The Treasure" on March 27 and the openings of two other plays.<sup>101</sup> There were a Hebrew Theater troupe and musical revue troupes, and there were 142 performances of plays in 1942.<sup>102</sup> Despite its controversial nature, the theater performed four full shows and had a fifth in rehearsal when the ghetto was liquidated.<sup>103</sup> The theater's variety shows were the most important musical outlet, and theater songwriters had the freedom to determine what themes they would address in their songs, even though they were limited by theatrical contexts.<sup>104</sup> Writers used natural imagery in their songs to illustrate the ghetto atmosphere but they often avoided explicit expressions of pain and death; their early revues frequently addressed darker elements of the ghetto without referring to the



ghetto itself. Later revues did not address these dark elements and became more encouraging as conditions in the ghetto worsened.<sup>105</sup>

The Vilna Judenrat played an important role in overseeing and in cultivating these active arts programs. The Judenrat and the Police regulated theater performances; Jacob Gens hoped that theater songs would accomplish the Judenrat's purpose of making the ghetto easier to endure and would provide relief from ghetto life, but he also hoped that their calming effects would keep the population in a governable state and increase their productivity. Therefore, theater songs reflected and confronted negative aspects of ghetto life while also advancing the Judenrat's agenda.<sup>106</sup> The biggest hindrance to the operation of the Judenrat's Culture Department was the loss of the use of several schools and a gymnasium because of an influx of Jews from elsewhere in Lithuania into the ghetto in late March 1942; at this time, there was concern that this measure would affect the operation of the schools, sports, and theater, even though fourteen events were planned for the next month.<sup>107</sup> Schools adjusted their schedules to accommodate all the students in the limited spaces, while other classes met in different locations, but the Culture Department thought that these measures would be detrimental to the continued functioning of the schools and hoped that they would soon be able to return to their original locations.<sup>108</sup>

Even though the residents of the Vilna ghetto withstood the effects of the initial murders in Lithuania and managed to implement a degree of normalcy into their lives, they did not quite realize their hope for liberation. In February 1943, the German government decided to liquidate all the Lithuanian ghettos, and even though the process began in April, Himmler ordered the liquidation of the Vilna ghetto in June 1943.<sup>109</sup> Immediately before liquidation began, there were 24,108 Jews still alive; ghetto residents who were able to work were deported to camps in Estonia, while 3,500 elderly, women, and children were murdered at Auschwitz and Sobibor and 1,200 remained in Vilna to work in a factory.<sup>110</sup> A thousand Jews escaped to the forests and joined the Soviet underground to continue fighting the Germans, but because Vilna had been the center of the resistance movement, the Germans considered the liquidation of the ghetto to be a priority and, aided by the Jewish police, completed the process in September 1943.<sup>111</sup> Between 195,000 and 196,000 Jews were murdered during the Holocaust in Lithuania through mass murder and in the ghettos.<sup>112</sup>

Even though hundreds of thousands of these victims were from Vilna, the residents of the Vilna ghetto were unique in that they maintained fairly high standards of living considering their circumstances. Because of the Judenrat's efforts and efficiency, there existed a surprisingly efficient government, health care system, and social welfare system as well as an impressive variety of social, cultural, and recreational activities in the ghetto. Their experiences add a new dimension to our understanding of life in Eastern European ghettos during the Holocaust and illustrate the extent to which humans will go to maintain their humanity in the midst of egregious indecencies. The ghettos of Eastern Europe were unimaginably horrible, filled with starvation, disease and death at the hands of abjectly cruel overlords. The residents of Vilna could not fully eradicate these plagues, and their writings reflect many of the same emotions people in other ghettos experienced, but the residents of Vilna did not allow these conditions to limit them. Each of the programs they established and their very survival were acts of resistance to the natural outcomes of imprisonment within ghettos, and their actions blatantly disproved many Nazi and anti-Semitic beliefs. They created a new civilization at the same time that the Nazis were trying to strip them of their civilization, and while they could not fully overcome the plagues of the ghetto nor could they escape mass murders, they had an existence that was more than survival, mindful of the past and oriented toward the future in order to prepare them for the life they hoped for in the post-war world.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Lester Eckman and Chaim Lazar, *The Jewish Resistance: The History of the Jewish Partisans in Lithuania and White Russia during the Nazi Occupation, 1940-1945* (New York: Shengold, 1977), 18; Richard Rhodes, *Masters of Death: The SS-Einsatzgruppen and the Invention of the Holocaust* (New York: Knopf, 2002), 53.

2. Yitzhak Arad, "The Murder of the Jews in German-Occupied Lithuania (1941-1944)," *The Vanished World of Lithuanian Jews*, ed. Alvydas Nikžentaitis, Stefan Schreiner, and Darius Staliūnas (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), 176; Eckman and Lazar, *The Jewish Resistance*, (New York: Shengold, 1977.) 19.

3. Ibid., 177.

4. Rudavsky, *To Live with Hope, To Die with Dignity* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987), 34; Dov Levin, *Fighting Back: Lithuanian Jewry's Armed Resistance to the Nazis, 1941-1945*. trans. Moshe Kohn and Dina Cohen. (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1985), 97.

5. Dina Porat, "The Jewish Councils of the Main Ghettos of Lithuania," in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 12, no. 1 (Spring 1998), 160. This attitude is ironic because it is the same attitude that influenced Nazi racial policies and the Final Solution: triumph of the Nazi state and establishment of a better future for the Volk, regardless of how that affected individual lives.

6. Arad, 188, 177.

7. Arūnas Bubnys, "The Holocaust in Lithuania: An Outline of the Major Stages and their Results," *The Vanished World of Lithuanian Jews*, ed. Alvydas Nikžentaitis, Stefan Schreiner, and Darius Staliūnas. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), 214.

8. Arad, 183.

9. Ibid., 189.

10. Ibid., 178, 185; Ronald Headland, *Messages of Murder: A Study of the Reports of the Einsatzgruppen of the Security Police and the Security Service, 1941-1943* (London: Associated University Presses, 1992), 123.

11. Bubnys, 215.

12. Rhodes, 53.

13. Bubnys, 213.

14. Arad, 177, 178.

15. Rhodes, 53, 54.

16. Eckman, 19; Rhodes, *Masters of Death: The SS-Einsatzgruppen and the Invention of the Holocaust*. (New York: Knopf, 2002), 57.

17. Ibid.; Arad, 182.

18. Eckman 19; Rhodes, 136.

19. Bubnys, 211; Rhodes, 136.

20. Eckman, 19; Rhodes, 137.

21. Eckman, 18, 19; Rhodes 138.

22. Arad, 184; Rhodes, *Masters of Death*, 138; Eckman, 19.

23. Rhodes, 140.

24. Eckman, 20.

25. Ibid., 20.

26. Porat, 63.

27. Rudavsky, 35; Porat, 63; Gilbert, *Music in the Holocaust: Confronting Life in the Nazi Ghettos and Camps*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 57.

28. Rudavsky, 36.

29. Sarunas Liekis, "Jewish Partisans and Soviet Resistance in Lithuania," in *Collaboration and Resistance During the Holocaust: Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania*, ed. by David Gaunt, Paul A. Levine, and Laura Palosuo. (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004), 464.

30. Rhodes, 215.

31. Eckman, 21.

32. Arad, 180, 186; Porat, 149.

33. Arad, 180, 189.

34. Eckman, 19; Porat, 150; Rhodes,, 53.

35. Dov Levin, *Fighting Back: Lithuanian Jewry's Armed Resistance to the Nazis, 1941-1945*, trans. Moshe Kohn and Dina Cohen (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1985), 107.

36. Gilbert, 59; Beinfeld, "Health Care in the Vilna Ghetto," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 12, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 67.

37. Beinfeld, 68, 67.

38. Gilbert, 35.

39. Porat, 151.

40. Ibid., 151, 152.

41. Porat, 152, 154, 156; Rudavsky, 34.

42. Porat, 154; Rudavsky,, 34.

43. Eckman 20, 23; Levin, 96, 98.

44. Porat,60.

45. Ibid., 155; 60.

46. Ibid., 60, 61.

47. Ibid., 52, 49.

48. Ibid., 50.

49. Ibid., 50, 60, 61.

50. Ibid., 50, 61.

51. Ibid., 61.

52. Ibid., 62, 63.

53. Beinfeld, 69, 90.

54. Ibid., 70-71.

55. Ibid. 79, 78.
56. "Social Welfare in the Vilna Ghetto, April 1943," in *A Holocaust Reader*, ed. Lucy S. Dawidowicz (New York: Behrman House, 1976), 190.
57. Beinfeld,, 78; "Health Care in the Vilna Ghetto, September 1942," in *A Holocaust Reader*, 181.
58. Beinfeld, 73, 74, 72.
59. Beinfeld, 75; "Health Care in the Vilna Ghetto, September 1942," 189, 182.
60. Beinfeld, 75; "Health Care in the Vilna Ghetto, September 1942," 182.
61. Beinfeld, 76, 77.
62. "Health Care in the Vilna Ghetto," 185, 182; Beinfeld 76.
63. Beinfeld, 78; "Health Care in the Vilna Ghetto," 182-183.
64. Beinfeld, 70, 66-67.
65. Ibid., 80, 83.
66. Ibid., 82, 81.
67. Ibid., 84, 85.
68. "Social Welfare in the Vilna Ghetto," 188, 189.
69. Beinfeld, 83.
70. "Social Welfare in the Vilna Ghetto," 188; "Health Care in the Vilna Ghetto," 183.
71. "Health Care in the Vilna Ghetto," 184.
72. Ibid., 185.
73. Beinfeld, 86.
74. "Social Welfare in the Vilna Ghetto," 191.
75. "Social Welfare in the Vilna Ghetto, 187, 189, 191; Beinfeld, 90.
76. Porat, 150; Eckman, 22.
77. "Cultural Activities in the Vilna Ghetto, March 1942," in *A Holocaust Reader*, 211, 208.
78. Ibid., 211.
79. Ibid., 212.
80. Ibid., 212-213, 209.
81. Gilbert, 60; Rudavsky, 49.
82. Rudavsky, 50; "Cultural Activities in the Vilna Ghetto," 209.
83. Rudavsky, 60; Gilbert, 56.
84. "Cultural Activities in the Vilna Ghetto," 212.

85. David H. Hirsch, "Abraham Sutzkever's Vilna Poems," *Modern Language Studies* 16, no. 1 (Winter 1986): 38. [www.jstor.org/](http://www.jstor.org/) (accessed September 26, 2008).

86. "Cultural Activities in the Vilna Ghetto," 210; Hirsch, 38.

87. Rudavsky, 55; "Cultural Activities in the Vilna Ghetto," 211.

88. "Cultural Activities in the Vilna Ghetto," 210; Gilbert, 61.

89. Joachim Braun, "Music as Resistance, Music as Survival," in *Collaboration and Resistance During the Holocaust: Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania*, eds. David Gaunt, Paul A. Levine, and Laura Palosuo (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004), 426; Rudavsky, 61.

90. Gilbert, 60-61.

91. Gilbert, 61; Rudavsky, 61.

92. Ruth Rubin, *Voices of a People: The Story of Yiddish Folksong* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1973), 424.

93. Gilbert, 66, 67.

94. *Ibid.*, 66, 72, 67.

95. *Ibid.*, 67.

96. Rubin, 448-449.

97. Braun, 427-428.

98. Rubin, 448.

99. Gilbert, 70, 75.

100. *Ibid.*, 75.

101. Rudavsky, 62; "Cultural Activities in the Vilna Ghetto," 210.

102. *Ibid.*

103. Gilbert, 62.

104. *Ibid.*, 79, 94.

105. *Ibid.*, 90, 87.

106. *Ibid.*, 93, 86.

107. "Cultural Activities in the Vilna Ghetto," 208-209, 210.

108. *Ibid.*, 209.

109. Arad, 195, 196.

110. Arad, 195; Bubnys, 217.

111. Arad, 195, 197; Liekis, 464; Levin, 98. Arad points out that other Lithuanian ghettos were turned into camps instead of being fully liquidated as Vilna was.

112. Bubnys, 218.

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# Women Terrorists

## Evidence of Gender Bias in Study and Practice

FRANCES NOBES

### Introduction

TERRORISM HAS LONG BEEN assumed to reside within the sphere of male dominance. It is taken for granted that men are the key perpetrators in terrorist attacks and the formation of such organizations. For centuries history has been written about men who became terrorists and were martyrs for their causes, being depicted as heroes, masters of conflict and warriors for justice. In this, the study of terrorism itself is inherently gendered. The study of terrorism is approached with a male bias that has been accepted as the norm. The existing literature exhibits a tendency to study female terrorists as 'others' outside the context of the general theme of terrorism, suggesting that the literature available is intrinsically male-dominant and male-biased. Much of the literature on terrorism reinforces female stereotypes and rationalizes and excuses the actions of female terrorists. By making female terrorists 'others' separate from real (i.e. male) terrorists, traditional studies of terrorism often diminish the female and attempt to analyse her differently from male terrorists.

This male-bias present in terrorism was, perhaps arguably, justified until the latter part of the Twentieth century, when women began to play a role in terrorist organizations. While their role is still limited, there has been an

increase in both the number and prominence of female terrorists in recent years. Knight argues that, "One of the most striking features of contemporary terrorist groups has been the prominent role played by women."<sup>1</sup> Whereas previously groups were reluctant to employ female terrorists, it is now the case that, "over half of Interpol-wanted terrorists are female" and, "groups of all kinds have now incorporated women as combatants."<sup>2</sup> According to research, 76 percent of terrorists from the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) in Turkey have been women as well as 66 percent from Chechen separatist groups.<sup>3</sup> Women have been active in terrorist organizations around the world including Afghanistan, Israel, Iraq, India, Lebanon, Pakistan, Russia, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Turkey and Uzbekistan.<sup>4</sup> Organizations that have previously shunned the participation of women, such as ETA, have recently allowed women terrorists in their organizations. However, in the study of terrorism and terrorist organizations women continued to be overlooked, and while their role in terrorist groups varies, there has been comparatively little study of the importance and use of women in terrorist organizations.

As such, this article highlights the gendered study of terrorism in three key areas. The first section of the paper addresses the arguments by various scholars as to why women become terrorists and how this may differ from the motives of male terrorists, as well as the differing perspectives of and reactions to female terrorism. The second section of the paper discusses the various roles that women have performed in terrorist organizations. I analyze the characteristics of women, both physical and emotional, which allow women to enact these roles successfully. There will be a particular focus on the women involved in the 'Honey-traps' of the Irish Republican Army as well as discussing the role of female suicide bombers in Iraq and other areas of terrorism. The final section of the paper analyzes the relative success or failure of the use of women in terrorist activities. While in some respects women can be a powerful symbol of terrorist causes, and their actions considered significantly more horrific than those of male terrorists, it can also be argued that their success eroding gender barriers regarding women's participation in political violence has been limited. On occasion, such as in the case of Hamas and other Islamist causes, using women as terrorists or suicide bombers weakens the cause of the organization as they have strict gender roles which must be upheld, including the exclusion of women from certain areas of life.

Before embarking on this journey through the psychology, role and success of female terrorists, it would do well to make an observation and definition from the outset. While this article does not delve into the murky depths of the problems in defining terrorism, this essay takes terrorism to mean unlawful acts of violence by individuals or groups aiming to create unrest within a population, country or collective group of states for political, religious or ideological causes.

### The Psychology Of Female Terrorists

THERE HAS BEEN much discussion amongst academics as to whether male and female terrorists approach their roles with the same attitudes and for the same reasons. In order to assess this claim, it is necessary to examine the ways in which female terrorists approach their tasks, their reasons for joining such organizations and the psychological traits of female terrorists.

Many scholars have noted that female terrorists participate in terrorist activities for particularly personal and moral reasons. Knight notes that women are more concerned with "the personal and moral aspects of the struggle" and that this in itself "appears to be more exclusive" to women than to men.<sup>5</sup> This implies that women become terrorists because they have a particularly personal affiliation with the cause related to the terrorist organization, or the moral element of the act of terrorism. In terms of having a sense of personal connection to a terrorist organization, this can be something as personal as having family and friends who are members of such a group. Galvin argues that many women are introduced into terrorist organizations by the men in their lives.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, women in the Chechen terrorist organization 'Black Widows' specifically joined this organization when their husbands were killed by Russian forces in Chechnya. Women who joined the Irish Republican Army, especially in later years, often joined because members of their family and their friends become involved in the organization. While they may not take an active or violent role in the organization, funding or aiding the organization can be the first step to becoming a terrorist, a role which will be discussed in more detail in the second section of this article.

The study of female terrorists has, in many respects, found them to possess the trait of selfless devotion. Galvin claims that, "females seem attracted [to terrorism] by promises of a better life for their children or the desire to

meet people's needs" rather than due to a desire for personal gain.<sup>7</sup> Knight argues that this has been a characteristic "instilled in women as a traditional female virtue" and so this is a natural and predictable reason for women to become terrorists.<sup>8</sup> There is indeed validity to Knight's argument as many societies across the world, even those deemed to be more culturally developed and more sensitive to gender equality, continue to associate the female sex with a sense of compassion above and beyond that of their male counterparts. This is supported by Tickner, who concurs that, "While men have been associated with defending the state and advancing its international interests as soldiers and diplomats, women have typically been engaged in the 'ordering' and 'comforting' roles both in the domestic sphere, as mothers and basic needs providers, and in the caring professions, as teachers, nurses and social workers."<sup>9</sup> This could lead us to believe that women have a natural propensity to be suited to the role of terrorists, and perhaps specifically suicide missions, as they have the innate and inherent ability to sacrifice themselves for the benefit of others. However, it is clear that men are capable of such altruism too, and yet this is rarely cited as one of the reasons for why men become terrorists and suicide bombers. It is, therefore, conceivable that such a motive is used to describe women in particular due to the bias of societal stereotypes.

Other scholars have argued that one of the reasons women become terrorists is because they have the desire to feel important and adequate; they crave a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives. While scholars such as Hoffer have argued that all terrorists desire a sense of purpose in their lives, this approach has been particularly emphasized when studying female terrorists. This is linked to the idea that woman who have fewer opportunities in life are more likely to become terrorists, as they especially feel the need for a more meaningful existence.<sup>10</sup> An example of this is the Russian terrorist Fruma Frumkina, who claims that, "her terrorist motives stemmed from a deep feeling of inadequacy and a desire to confirm her own importance as an individual."<sup>11</sup> While it has traditionally been acceptable to portray male terrorists as seeking to be righteous martyrs for their cause and win victory and recognition not only for their causes but also for themselves, female terrorists have often been type-cast as sacrificial lambs for their children and loved ones. This can be seen clearly by contrasting the recounting of the terrorist profile of Carlos the Jackal compared to those of female terrorists. While Carlos the Jackal was accepted as having limited ideological

or faith-based ties with the terrorist organizations he served, the same fable would never apply to a female terrorist.<sup>12</sup> This is perhaps another example of the subconscious subjugation of the role of women in terrorist organizations. While this has been the conventional view of female terrorists, it is becoming more accepted by academics that female terrorists also join such organizations in order to achieve fame and glory. Galvin also argues that it is a mean of escaping, "fears of dependency" which can be formed by women from a young age, especially in societies where the social, political and intellectual rights of women are inhibited.<sup>13</sup>

In societies where the rights and opportunities of women are restricted, especially in terms of social and political action, women are more likely to become terrorists. In the case of female members of the Russian Socialist Revolutionary Party, there was a high proportion of '*intelligentki*' amongst females within the organization, suggesting that, "these were highly motivated, self-assertive young women."<sup>14</sup> Women who join terrorist organizations are often strong-willed and, "the boldest...revolutionaries."<sup>15</sup> The frustration felt by such individuals who were unable to express themselves politically and had "little opportunity to employ their intellectual talents usefully" resulted in resorting to terrorist organizations as a way of satisfying their needs for social, political and intellectual stimulation and representation.<sup>16</sup> In a society where such opportunities are obstructed, women have been known to turn to terrorist organizations to avoid a sense of isolation and segregation from those similar to themselves. One could argue that this can be seen increasingly clearly in Islamic states where terrorist organizations such as Hamas have allowed women to become suicide bombers and terrorists. The terrorist group Islamic Jihad has taken to training women as young as eighteen to be suicide bombers against Israel, arguing that a shortage of male candidates forced them to use Palestinian women as suicide bombers.<sup>17</sup> However, adopting this policy may in fact damage their cause in the long term (an issue we shall return to later).

Regarding the psychology of women who partake in terrorist activities, it has also been suggested by scholars such as Galvin & Knight, that women hold a much more intense emotional faith and belief in the causes for which they choose to fight. While it can clearly be argued that people who voluntarily become suicide bombers and sacrifice their lives for a cause must feel passionately about it, this sentiment has been attributed more strongly to women. Galvin notes that, "women have shown extraordinary adhesion

to causes in our times and a greater than usual readiness to take up arms on behalf of them.”<sup>18</sup> Knight supports this idea by arguing that women feel a greater sense of “heroic martyrdom” than their male counterparts.<sup>19</sup> However, this can be linked back to the sense that women feel so passionately about such causes for personal and moral reasons as discussed above—namely that women are inherently more driven by morality than men. Perhaps it is the case that one would find it more acceptable for women to undertake acts of terrorism if they felt extraordinarily strongly about the cause for which they were fighting. While violence has been accepted in the male sphere of influence and is considered to be a masculine quality, indeed a sign of masculinity, the only way for it to be accepted as a female trait is if the woman in question shows undeniable and remarkable conviction to her cause. Thus, while it can be argued that women have portrayed an astounding assurance in their beliefs, it could also be seen as a quality which has been placed on women in order to justify their actions as terrorists and suicide bombers.

One final area to be discussed pertaining to the psychology of female terrorists is the charge that “female terrorists have been described by many as more violent, ruthless, and uncompromising than their male counterparts.”<sup>20</sup> While some have used this quality to describe female terrorists as “the boldest...revolutionaries” this is perhaps a somewhat forgiving and flattering approach.<sup>21</sup> While the attacks carried out by women may not necessarily be more violent or bloody than those undertaken by men, cultural perceptions make them more vicious and brutal. As the stereotype of women in almost all cultures is one of submission and fragility, when women perform terrorist actions they are more shocking and perceived as more violent and horrific. This is because of the unexpected nature of the attacks, and also the sense that the sex which has been charged with values of nurturing and protecting is capable of destruction and brutal murder. Leila Khaled, one of the most famous members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), demonstrates this conflict, as the presence of children on the aircraft she is planning to hijack temporarily sways her from her goal.<sup>22</sup> However, identifying with her cause before all other things, she continues her mission to hijack flight TWA 840 in August 1969.

When discussing the psychology of female terrorists, there is the need to analyze the ways in which female terrorists are compared to their male

counterparts. While scholars aim to understand male terrorists in terms of why they join certain causes, female terrorists are often studied in order to excuse their behaviour more than understand it. There has been a tradition of studying female terrorists in order to show that there is something outside of the woman's control which allows or forces her to become a terrorist. One excuse which is used to justify the role of female terrorists is that "she is not a culpable actor if her actions stem from a faulty biology."<sup>23</sup> Gentry argues that in the majority of cases researchers fail to portray female terrorists as rational actors, and instead depict them as victims of biology. Women who have taken up the role of a terrorist have often been considered, "fearful, soulless, god-forsaken creatures, ciphers or symbols rather than as recognizable persons in their own right."<sup>24</sup> Similarly, scholars and researchers have been more comfortable studying the non-violent roles than the role of female terrorists who participate in brutal and bloody attacks. It could be argued that this is because, "the *non-violent*" female terrorist does not challenge Western notions of femininity.<sup>25</sup> This can be seen in the case of the Black Widows of Chechnya, as "many Russians believe these women are being exploited by terrorists."<sup>26</sup> This presents the idea that other terrorists, specifically male terrorists, have taken advantage of the inherent weakness of women and turned them to terrorism. Both of these elements can be seen in Dillon's account of the trials of the women who participated in the IRA "Honeytraps." These operations shall be discussed in more detail below, but suffice it to say the judge found it hard to conceive that the women would be involved in such activities.<sup>27</sup> The women were given more lenient sentences than they would have received had they been men.

These examples display an intriguing attitude in the study of female terrorists. Women who participate in terrorist organizations appear to be viewed in one of two ways: as a hapless victim or as a sacrificial martyr for the cause. A significant portion of the literature also juxtaposes the female terrorist as an unashamedly sexual siren calling men to their deaths or as a woman consumed with altruism and compassion, sacrificing herself for the greater good. The virgin/whore complex has been an integral part of the gendered approach to the study of terrorism. It has been an inherent weakness of the study of terrorists that women are compared unequally to men who participate in terrorist activities, and their motives are considered differently to those of men.

### The Role Of Female Terrorists

THE ROLES THAT women have held in terrorist organizations have changed over time and are diverse. While the female terrorist has been, "leader, follower, intellectual, 'gofer', mother and mistress" the roles women take in terrorist organizations vary not only between groups but between individuals.<sup>28</sup> However, the roles of female terrorists can generally be divided into two separate groups—violent and non-violent roles. While some women are allowed to take part in some of the most violent terrorist actions, such as female suicide bombers used by Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, Hamas and the Tamil Tigers, others may only perform peripheral tasks rather than being involved in the more violent nature of terrorism. This distinction between violent and non-violent roles of women in terrorist groups has been established most clearly through two modes of studying female terrorists; their roles as either a nurturing mother or a vengeful mother.<sup>29</sup> The "nurturing mother" role of women in terrorist organizations is one of "domesticated" terror in which her desire to be maternal is a motivation for engaging in terrorist activities. This nurturing role necessarily leads her to non-violent activities within the organization such as caring for the well-being of terrorists before attacks and providing services to the terrorists, such as hiding them from the authorities or acting as nurses for injured terrorists. The vengeful mother, on the other hand, is decidedly more frustrated with the political system or has a particular grievance which is represented by the terrorist organization. This leads them to hold more active roles in the terrorist organization, such as Leila Khaled's role as a key figure in the PFLP. While the women may not be suicide bombers or be involved in the most bloody of terrorist attacks, they are more likely to be instrumental in their plotting and execution than the women adopting a nurturing role.

One conclusion drawn from research conducted on female suicide bombers is that the vast majority of women perform suicide operations "within the context of a military campaign against foreign occupying forces...to create or maintain territorial sovereignty."<sup>30</sup> This has been seen as a discernable pattern amongst female terrorists in the past, although one could argue that in recent years terrorist attacks have been caused by factors other than territorial sovereignty, especially with the resurgence of religiously motivated terrorism. Therefore, while women may have been used



more frequently in disputes over land and in military campaigns, one could also argue that this is no longer the case, as more and more women join terrorist organizations for different reasons. For example, a large proportion of the Baader-Meinhof members were women, although this organization had nothing to do with any land dispute and was not engaged in a military campaign. However, it is still fair to argue that women are involved in terrorist organizations for a variety of reasons and their role in these organizations is often a reflection not only of the individual temperaments of each woman but the reasons she joined the organization.

One of the roles women are known to have assumed in terrorist groups is one in which their physical attributes are used, be it their trustworthiness or their physical attractiveness to men, to the organizations advantage. Terrorist organizations use women's physical attributes and sexuality in order to achieve three main tasks: the furthering of goals, the acceptance of the female into the group, and "for the express purpose of attracting others (male and female) into the group."<sup>31</sup> Women have been used as recruitment bait in order to attract others to join a terrorist organization, either using the positive characteristics associated with women, such as honesty and reliability, or by using their sexuality. Women have been known to be used as terrorists rather than men because women are often trusted more than men. This is linked to the idea that terrorists are assumed to be male, and thus women are less likely to be stopped and searched. Similarly, the cultural and societal restrictions which have been associated with women regarding the ability to thoroughly search their bodies are an advantage for terrorists. Particularly in Islamic cultures, it is seen as highly inappropriate to search women in the same manner men would be searched for weapons and explosives. Therefore, it is easier for women to perform terrorist attacks as they are less suspicious and less suspected than men. This can be seen in the case of Algeria where women were used by the National Liberation Front (FLN) as they were considered less suspicious than male terrorists and could slip through check points more easily.<sup>32</sup>

Another non-violent role adopted by female terrorists is one of a sexual nature. It is clearly more difficult for male terrorists to form relationships with women outside their group as there is an element of secrecy and security to be upheld. Therefore, it has been the role of women within terrorist organizations to seize the role of sexual partners for male terrorists. These relationships may naturally flourish within an organization, or "women

may be recruited directly for these purposes” either from within the group or from without.<sup>33</sup> While one could argue that the women who perform this role within terrorist organizations are not terrorists in a conventional sense, they are still part of a terrorist organization and are, in some form, aiding the terrorists who carry out more traditional terrorist activities.

The use of physical attributes can also be seen most clearly in the case of the Provisional IRA and their use of “Honeytraps” for British soldiers. The IRA used “the ‘honeytrap,’ a form of sexual entrapment, as a way of luring soldiers to their deaths.”<sup>34</sup> Female terrorists were used to lure British soldiers away from bars and pubs in Belfast and take them to an apartment or house where male members of the IRA would execute them. The women involved in these plans were attractive, young women who would entice men away from these bars under false pretenses, believing in the hope of sexual encounters with these beautiful women. This is one example of where a woman’s physical attributes were a direct means of performing terrorist attacks.

The use of preconceived ideas and stereotypes of women plays an important part in deciding the role of women in terrorist organizations. This links with the point above that the way society treats women can be an advantage to terrorist organizations. For example, Galvin argues that, “A woman who appears pregnant still arouses less suspicion in an operational setting...than the male in any disguise.”<sup>35</sup> Due to the assumed placid and peaceful nature of women they are considerably less suspicious and dubious than men. Therefore, it is easier for women to pass through security checks and be considered less of a threat before performing a terrorist activity. Leila Khaled points out most clearly the social stereotype that works in favour of terrorists—that women are perceived to be non-violent. While being questioned in an airport shortly before hijacking a plane, an officer asked her if she has packed or is carrying any weapons or sharp objects, to which she replied, “What would a girl like me ever do with a pistol or a knife, officer?”<sup>36</sup> This plays on the idea that women are submissive and nurturing creatures assumed to be innocent. Shedd argues that, “women can wear a suicide belt device beneath her clothes and appear pregnant,” as does O’Rourke, which exploits the idea of women as nurturing creatures.<sup>37</sup>

The role of female terrorists has also become more prominent due to the media attention that they bring to an organization. As female terrorists are considered rare, when they do perform terrorist actions they are likely to

attract more media attention. This is a somewhat cyclical concept as the role of female terrorists appears to have increased as the media reports in more detail when women are involved. Because of this women are more readily accepted into such groups as they are more likely to attract media attention. Shedd writes that "women are more likely to receive the media attention needed by the group," and thus this is one of the roles of females in terrorist organizations—to bring media attention to the group and cause.<sup>38</sup> This could be seen in the case of Leila Khaled; due to her physical attractiveness and strong beliefs she brought the PFLP a significant amount of media coverage and attention.

### The "Success" Of Female Terrorists

THE "SUCCESS" OF FEMALE TERRORISTS is defined by the extent to which female terrorists have been successful in eroding traditional gender barriers associated with political violence, particularly in terms of being accepted into terrorist organizations, their position within such groups and how they are seen by the rest of the world. While more groups than ever are allowing women to join their ranks and fight for their causes, there are still a number of terrorist organizations that prohibit or restrict women's roles and membership. This is most clear in the case of Islamic terrorist organizations. Sheik Ahmed Yassin, the founder of Hamas, declared that, "a woman martyr is problematic for Muslim society. A man who recruits a woman is breaking Islamic law."<sup>39</sup> While Yassin later established "rules under which female suicide bombers were acceptable," many other organizations did not.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, while numbers of female terrorists may be increasing in certain groups, others still refuse to allow women to represent their organizations.

It can also be argued that even though the number of women in the organizations has increased, their positions and status within the organizations remain significantly lower than those of male terrorists. It is still common that the, "power position [of women] frequently is less than that of the male"<sup>41</sup> and that "she is a token member and not a full participant."<sup>42</sup> This is seen in the example of the "Honeytraps" used by the IRA. While the women are able to lure the soldiers away from bars it is the male members of the group who are given the task of killing these men.<sup>43</sup> There is a reluctance to allow the women to participate in the more violent

aspects of the attacks. Therefore, one could argue that female terrorists have not been as successful in eroding traditional notions of gender as they may first appear. Despite their growing presence, the status that these women achieve within organizations is rarely a high one. It could also be argued that female terrorists have to work harder than male terrorists in order to be successful in the group. Because women are widely considered to, "need male protection and are physically unsuitable to undertake combat roles" they are forced to prove themselves worthy of participating in terrorist groups in any capacity.<sup>44</sup>

Another possible measure of success is the general acceptance of women in the role of terrorists. While men participating in irregular political violence are considered to be "terrorists," women are seen as fanatics or mentally unstable rather than achieving the political label of "terrorists." In fact, female terrorists are often deemed to be "amoral fanatics" rather than terrorists.<sup>45</sup> This is reinforced by the existing literature on the psychology of women terrorists. Knight gives numerous examples of female terrorists who are so overwhelmed with guilt that they take their own lives as a form of payment and balance for their actions.<sup>46</sup> She also highlights that "this apparent strain of instability was not uncommon among the female terrorists."<sup>47</sup> This reinforces the notion that women are expected to be nurturing and caring individuals, and thus turning to terrorism is excused either by biology or by assuming that they have something wrong with them. In many respects, female terrorists are denied the assumption that they choose terrorism out of a logical thought process.

Curiously, female terrorists may serve as a source of inspirational to other women. Leila Khaled was herself both inspired by other female terrorists, specifically Amina Dhahbour, and served as an inspiration to other women who became terrorists.<sup>48</sup> Women, particularly in oppressive and conservative societies, appear to respect female terrorists more than their male counterparts. This may be a simple reaction to a sense of equality spreading to such organizations, and a sense of a woman's ability to do whatever she chooses. This could also be because when women see other females involved in terrorist activities it seems more inspirational due to the fact that women are able to participate and fight for a cause as equals with men. However, as seen above this is in fact rarely the case.

## Conclusion

THERE IS AN INHERENT sexism within the study and practice of terrorism and terrorist organizations. Not only are women considered differently than men, perceived as both physically and mentally weak, relegated to play a nurturing role within society, but females who participate in terrorist organizations “are required to play the male game according to male rules.”<sup>49</sup> There is an irrefutable mentality within terrorist organizations that “as long as there [are] men available, women should not actually commit terrorist acts.”<sup>50</sup> Therefore while some terrorist organizations “boast that women terrorists have ‘equal opportunity’ within the terrorist framework and support this with revolutionary philosophy, this does not seem to be born out in practice.”<sup>51</sup> The cultural view of women still insists that women are incapable of performing terrorist activities due to their feminine qualities. Societies across the globe believe that “women are not born terrorists. They have had to make, or remake, themselves in that image from scratch.”<sup>52</sup> It is clear to see the gender bias that is present not only within terrorist organizations but without. While female terrorists have increasingly been accepted into terrorist organizations, evidence indicates that these groups have reluctantly accepted women as a tactic rather than through a sense of gender equality. Women create a tactical advantage, as the use of female terrorists is both unexpected and socially unacceptable due to gendered notions of women’s “unnatural” proclivity towards violence. That said, neither the study nor the presence of female terrorists has served to challenge traditional notions of women and political violence.

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## They are Destroying the Female Species

### The Evolution of Sexual Violence in the Congo

KATE TOWSON

**I**N 2002, President Joseph Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo signed peace accords with the members of various rebel movements that had invaded and pillaged the country. The conflict began around 1994, in large part due to the Congo's shared border with Rwanda. Following the genocide in Rwanda, thousands of Hutus and Tutsis flooded into the country, becoming the catalyst for what would eventually be called "Africa's World War." When the peace agreements were signed in 2002, the death toll in the country was thought to be 3.3 million.<sup>1</sup> However, the peace accords have changed little in the country. Sporadic, yet brutal, fighting continues to displace people living in the Eastern provinces of the Congo. New records place the death toll closer to 5.4 million people. A new study by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) estimates that 45,000 people die a month in the Congo, mostly from diarrhea, malaria, pneumonia or starvation.<sup>2</sup> The death toll in Congo is higher than the *combined* death tolls from conflicts in Rwanda, Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo, as well as the Gulf War and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>3</sup>

The DRC also exhibits one of the worst instances of mass-rape in history. At this point in the conflict only estimates can be made as to the number of rapes committed; even cautious estimates place the number in the tens of thousands. Due to the stigma associated with rape in the DRC,

as well as the lack of functioning medical facilities, this number is thought to be grossly underestimated.<sup>4</sup> It is the purpose of this article to examine the evolution of mass rape in the Congo as well as its unique aspects and societal implications.

### *Conflict In The DRC: Background Information*

The conflict in the DRC is extremely complex and has been exacerbated by the fact that the country is home to countless valuable minerals: copper, timber, coltan, silver, diamonds and gold. This, as Hawkins elaborates, makes the conflict "economically self-sustaining...the continuation of the conflict perpetuates conditions favorable to the exploitation of the resources of the DRC by parties to the conflict...and opportunistic corporations and individuals."<sup>5</sup> Therefore, while the initial causes of the conflict are complex, the overwhelming amount of valuable resources means that many of the forces currently involved have little to do with these initial causes; merely, they are participating in a larger attempt to control land filled with valuable resources.

The beginning of the conflict can be traced to the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. The eastern provinces of the Congo border Rwanda, and it is these sections of the country that have been the most affected. In 1994, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), the Hutu-dominated military group, initiated a genocide in Rwanda against ethnic Tutsis. After 100 days of unprecedented bloodshed, the RPF were defeated by the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA). Close to a million Hutus entered the Congo, at the time known as Zaire. Zaire was ruled by Mobutu Sese Seko, a brutal dictator who had garnered his fair share of political rivals both within the country and surrounding countries.<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that one of the main reasons Hutus sought refuge in Zaire was then-president Mobutu's pro-Hutu attitude.

Members from the RPF, as well as Hutu civilians, set up camps along the border where "the Hutu militants regrouped, recruited and trained soldiers and, using the camps as bases, began to launch attacks against Rwanda."<sup>7</sup> At the same time the Rwandan government was fending off attacks from the newly militarized RPF, Rwanda was also attempting to protect the Banyamulenge: Tutsis who are of Congolese nationality. The combination of Mobutu's pro-Hutu stance and the RPF's presence in the Congo meant

that the Banyamulenge were in serious danger of extermination. Therefore, the Rwandan government, in an attempt to fight off the RPF and protect vulnerable Tutsis, formed a coalition with the governments of Burundi and Uganda and forcibly entered the country. Surprisingly, as Hawkins describes, "finding little resistance in their pursuit, the anti-Mobutu alliance headed for Kinshasa, toppling the regime in 1997."<sup>8</sup> Laurent Kabila became president, and Zaire became the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Ties between the new government and the countries that had installed it—Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda—turned sour quickly. All three governments were unhappy with President Kabila's inability to reign in remaining Hutus still committing acts of violence along the border. In 1998 the militaries of Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Angola advanced together on Kinshasa, and although Kabila stayed in power, the country would become the stage for "Africa's World War."<sup>9</sup>

Peace accords were signed in 1999, yet proved to be ineffective in containing the wide-scale violence.<sup>10</sup> Peace accords were signed again in 2003. As the New York Times reports, President Kabila's responsibilities were enumerated in the accords; he would "lead a transitional government for 18 months that will pave the way for the country's first democratic elections..."<sup>11</sup> Further, Kabila would have "four vice presidents, one from each of the two principal rebel groups, another from the unarmed political opposition and another from Mr. Kabila's political party."<sup>12</sup> The 2003 peace agreements were praised, and all of the countries involved in the conflict pulled their troops from the Congo.

While the peace accords are certainly a sign of advancement for the Congo, peace has not been achieved. Rwanda and Burundi sent troops in the country once more, and upwards of 20 different rebel groups roam the eastern Provinces for various causes, leaving civilians vulnerable to attack. In 2007, the North Kivu province saw violence re-awakened when the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) began fighting with the National Congress for Peoples' Defense (CNDP) an armed wing of militiamen headed by the notorious rebel Laurent Nkunda. Amnesty International reported that the violence inflicted on civilians in North Kivu was the worst it had been since the 2003 peace accords.<sup>13</sup> Women remain particularly susceptible to violence during these conflicts and it is their vulnerable position in *peaceful* Congolese society that provides structure and support for their treatment during war.

*Women in Congolese Society*

Congolese women are considered inferior both culturally and legally. Women are treated as second-class citizens in the country, an attitude reflected in many traditional Congolese practices. The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women Committee (CEDAW) "was worried by the persistence of customs and practices which represent a violation of fundamental women's rights, such as dowry, inheritance, polygamy, forced marriage, and female genital mutilation" prevalent in the Congo.<sup>14</sup> Violence against women was common even before the conflict began.

Culturally, there is an emphasis on marriage and virginity and a negative stigma placed on victims of rape. Few girls are educated or have access to education. This dearth of opportunity is evident in the lack of representation of women in business or political roles. Women's ownership of land is dependent entirely on their marriage; even this does not empower women because of the emphasis on marriage and virginity. Reports note that surviving rape victims face insurmountable hurdles in overcoming poverty due to the fact that many of them cannot own land. Amnesty International explains that "a young, unmarried girl who has been raped will find it difficult to find a husband. The victim's family may feel ashamed, or may be concerned that they will not receive the dowry and material possessions a marriage is expected to bring to the family."<sup>15</sup> In Congolese society women without husbands, and therefore without land, cannot survive for very long.

Human Rights Watch asserts that "although women are a major-if not the major-source of support for the family, the Congolese Family Code requires them to obey their husbands who are recognized as the head of the household."<sup>16</sup> The legal code further subjugates women due to the lack of strong legislation against sexual abuse and punishment for perpetrators. Mossi Mota and Duarte report that the Congolese government is attempting to implement full-scale legislation that redefines the legal recognition of "rape" to go beyond penetration. Currently, women must prove that forcible penetration occurred because "all sexual violence without such penetration is qualified as an attack on good morals, and considered less serious than rape."<sup>17</sup> Much of this stems from the fact that most allegations of rape are dealt with on a local level, typically between families. Moreover, some families "have 'resolved' rape cases by accepting a money payment from the

perpetrator or his family or by arranging to have the perpetrator marry the victim.”<sup>18</sup>

### *Mass Rape in the Congo*

After the genocide in Rwanda, many thought they had witnessed the very worst of humanity. The conflict in Congo proves otherwise. For the women at the center of the conflict rape has become a part of their daily existence. The statistics are staggering. In some villages in the eastern provinces, 90 percent of the women have been raped.<sup>19</sup> USAID conducted a study in the provinces of Bukavu, Goma, Shabunda, South Kivu, Maniema and Kalemie. In 2001, the province of Shabunda's hospital saw an estimated 2,000 rape cases in 2001. In South Kivu, hospitals saw an estimated 2,500-3,000 rape cases between 1999 and 2001.<sup>20</sup> According to the United Nations 27,000 rapes were reported in the South Kivu province in 2006. Dr. Denis Mukwege, a doctor at Panzi Hospital in eastern Congo, remarked that in his clinic, ten new rape victims arrive every day.<sup>21</sup> While some estimates place the total number of women raped in the tens of thousands, other estimates place the number closer to hundreds of thousands.<sup>22</sup> John Holmes, of the United Nations, commented that “the sexual violence in Congo is the worst in the world. The sheer numbers, the wholesale brutality, the culture of impunity-it's appalling.”<sup>23</sup>

### The Perpetrators

OF THE VARIOUS REBEL GROUPS operating in the Congo, some are notable for their acts of sexual violence against women and children. The Mai-Mai are a local rebel group composed mostly of Congolese fighting against the foreign invasions into their country, including groups from Rwanda, Uganda or Burundi. Other reports, however, note that the Mai-Mai are “sometimes defined as Congolese of other ethnic groups, particularly those who speak Kinyarwanda or are of Tutsi origin.”<sup>24</sup> The Mai-Mai are a loose conglomeration of men that fluctuates constantly to the point of changing alliances. Many members of Congolese society claim that the Mai-Mai were supposed to be part of a popular resistance towards foreign invasion, a cause that should have unified the country. Instead, the Mai-Mai have become a resistance movement whose initial cause has been thwarted

and obscured by the growing lack of structure and mass chaos currently ubiquitous in Congolese society. Human Rights Watch interviewed a thirty-two year old woman who was raped by three Mai-Mai soldiers. She said, "People recognized them. Everyone is Mai-Mai. At the beginning [of the conflict] they were good, but they became bad."<sup>25</sup> In fact, the Mai-Mai have become notorious for some of the worst accounts of rape in the country; their trademark is holding women in sexual slavery for months at a time.<sup>26</sup> They are often recognized by community members as committing sexual assaults with bayonets or branches, and often mutilate victims' bodies.<sup>27</sup>

Other groups committing rape atrocities include Rwandan rebel groups, comprised of both Tutsi and Hutu. Some of these rebel groups are *interahamwe*, or the men who participated in the genocide in Rwanda. Other Rwandan rebel groups include the Army for the Liberation of Rwanda (ALIR), the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (the FDLR), and the FDD, which is a Burundian Hutu-group.<sup>28</sup> Burundian groups are known for raping young boys and men; Rwandan groups, in general, have become notorious for their use of gang-rape.<sup>29</sup> Finally, women have also been raped by members of the Congolese national forces: the FARDC.<sup>30</sup>

### *Sexual Violence Against Women*

The women in the Congo have been subjected to unimaginable acts of rape and sexual violence. Congolese human rights activist Christine Schuler Deschryver, interviewed by Democracy Now, testified to the abuses faced by women on a daily basis as well as to the systematic nature of it:

It started almost eleven years ago, and nobody's talking about this femicide...they are just destroying the female species...in Africa, woman is the heart of family She is doing everything, babies, looking for food, looking for the whole family. And now they're destroying this resource.<sup>31</sup>

Deschryver makes a grave point. Women are the most important resource in many African families. As explained previously, Congolese women are primary supporters within their families, performing most of the agricultural demands as well as gathering the majority of food.<sup>32</sup> The mass rape campaign is destroying generations of primary supporters. The perpetrators are dooming countless Congolese families to years of more poverty.



### *Causes of Violence*

The use of mass rape in the Congo is unique due to the conflict's convoluted nature. Rape is being used as a tool of warfare, yet at the same time it is also a symptom of war. Some rebel groups rape to maintain control over a particular section of the country; some rebel groups rape because women are considered the spoils of war.

Several theorists point to the role of Congolese women in society. In past conflicts, mass rape has been particularly effective in destroying women where they are considered legally inferior and bound to their husbands. Similarly, mass rape has also been effective in cultures where virginity and marriage are emphasized. Both are the case in the Congo, and mass rape obliterates these cultural institutions. First, rape occurs because of women's second-class status and because women are objectified. Second, after surviving rape, women are often shunned by their communities and husbands because they are no longer considered "pure." USAID interviewed doctors at the Panzi Hospital in eastern Congo. One explained that, "[The rape] is done to destroy completely the social, family fabric of society."<sup>33</sup> Indeed, this harkens back to Deschryver's comment that women are the heart of Africa. The majority of rapes of women occur when they are fulfilling their societal and familial roles: gathering firewood, collecting food in the fields or washing laundry at the river.<sup>34</sup> Congolese families survive on the hard work of women; after being raped, many survivors find that they can no longer fulfill these duties. Doctors Without Borders (MSF) explains that, "they are the ones who have to help bring in food yet they dare not go to their fields to cultivate for fear of insecurity and possibility of being raped again...but in a context where cultivation is the key source of food...going to the fields remains for many women the only way of ensuring that they can feed their children."<sup>35</sup> In this way, mass rape truly destroys the social fabric of a community, annihilating women's economic livelihood and demolishing their reputation in the face of cultural norms.

Testimony from rape survivors demonstrates the shame and stigma associated with rape victims. Rape victims are blamed for the violence inflicted upon them and many are ostracized by their friends, family and community. Gieseke describes the relationship husbands and wives must now navigate post-rape as a "climate of silent hostility. Instead of helping the women recover, it appears that in these cases the man only multiplies his wife's pain

(or even his daughter's or sister's pain)."<sup>36</sup> This "climate of silent hostility" does not just exist between husbands and wives, but between sisters and brothers, friends and neighbors. Caroline, who was fifteen when she was raped, has been isolated from her community since her attack:

Before, I was a student and had friends, but now we have no home, nothing, so I can't study any more. When we walk along the street, people look down on us. The community despises us. I will never forget that I have been raped.<sup>37</sup>

An anonymous women, who was twenty-three when she was raped, talks of the hostility that now exists between her and her husband:

Since what happened, my husband insults me every day calling me the wife of the militiamen who raped me and sometimes he doesn't even sleep at home. I have no joy, no peace of mind.<sup>38</sup>

This woman's testimony exposes the "climate of silent hostility" that Gieseke argues infiltrates marriages in the Congo.

Second, mass rape is used as a tool of warfare to further each rebel group's attempt at controlling land. Because Congo's valuable land and resources have exacerbated the severity of the conflict, rape is used as a form of control over communities to assert their group's dominance. Human Rights Watch researcher Anneke Van Woudenberg argues that, "this is not rape because soldiers have got bored...it is a way to ensure that communities accept the power and authority of that particular armed group. This is about showing terror."<sup>39</sup> One of the ways rebel groups use rape as a form of a control is in the form of reprisal. Women have testified to being raped due to the rebel group's perception that the area is loyal to another group. More often than not, women in these communities have no loyalties. Yet, rape still remains an effective way to create a submissive community willing to accept the political dominance of a rebel group.

Rape has been committed in the name of ethnic differences, although not to the same degree that mass rape was committed in conflicts such as Rwanda. Nonetheless, some rebel groups have proclaimed to their victims that they are being attacked because they belong to a specific ethnic group. Amnesty International reports that women in the Ituri province have been subjected to rape if they are Hema, Lendu or Banyamulenge.<sup>40</sup>

Countless rapes are opportunistic in nature. Currently, men can rape with impunity. The prison systems are in disarray; in the 60 Minutes report *War Against Women* a prison in Kinshasa had been overtaken by prisoners and the guards had been killed.<sup>41</sup> It has been reported that "offenders are rarely arrested by the police even when there is a report. When they are arrested, the offenders are rarely prosecuted."<sup>42</sup> Further, the United States Department of State claims that the judicial system has collapsed; there exists "harsh and life-threatening conditions in prison and detention facilities; prolonged pretrial detention; lack of an independent and effective judiciary; and arbitrary interference with privacy, family, and home..."<sup>43</sup> Political dominance, ethnic conflict, and a lack of consequence are only some of the dimensions of mass rape; the element of humiliation inflicted on the victims also drives this phenomenon.

### *Rape and Humiliation*

In addition to asserting political dominance, rebels also rape to humiliate their victims. As Sideris argues in "Rape in War and Peace," the public intrusion of a woman's private domain causes a woman to feel dehumanized and "ruined" in front of her family or community.<sup>44</sup> Numerous accounts from women have shown the extent to which humiliation is used as a tactic. Some accounts show that children are forced to hold down their mothers while they are being raped, families are forced to watch or relatives are forced to rape each other. Teresa's testimony exhibits the extent to which rebel groups used family members to humiliate women. She says:

When the mayi-mayi [Mai-Mai] came into our house, they tried to take hold of me so that they could rape me. My eldest son, who is 16, tried to stop them. They took hold of him by the arm and pushed him against me and for about an hour tried to force him to have sex with me. There were a lot of them, and it was difficult for us to resist them. My other two children looked on, crying...<sup>45</sup>

Some women have been kidnapped and sexually enslaved for weeks or months at a time. During their abduction, women are continually gang-raped and tortured. Caroline, who was 15 when she was first abducted, speaks of the torture inflicted upon her and her mother:

I was on my way to the fields with my mother. The soldiers took us to Lubao. There, they tied us up, gave my mother 50 lashes of the whip and then put her in another house. They bound me hand and foot, too, and gave me 80 lashes. The next day, they took us to the riverside, pushed a tree branch into our backs and dropped us into the water. Each morning, noon and evening they would put us all in the same house, force us to lie on the ground and then they would rape us, all in the same room. While they were doing this, they were hitting and kicking us in the stomach, back and face.<sup>46</sup>

The testimony exposes the extent to which the perpetrators felt they had to break the spirit of their victims. Forcing family members to participate or abducting women for the purposes of sexual slavery utterly destroys the victims, leaving many mentally scarred.

### *Torture and Mutilation*

To further reinforce the trauma and future isolation rape victims face, many perpetrators left physical scars. The mass rape in the Congo has been accompanied by unprecedented acts of brutality committed against victims. Dr. Denis Mukwege is the director at Panzi Hospital in eastern Congo. He specializes in surgery on fistulas. Rectovaginal fistulas occur when the tissue between the anus and vagina is destroyed. This causes severe pain, the inability to have or enjoy sexual intercourse, and fecal incontinence.<sup>47</sup> A fistula is a medical condition considered rare in the United States and only tends to occur during particularly traumatic child-birth. Fistulas in the Congo are occurring at a startling rate. Rob Nordland reports that "so many cases began showing up that Western medical experts at first calling it impossible-especially when local doctors declared that most of the fistulas were the consequences of rapes."<sup>48</sup> Dr. Mukwege's Panzi Hospital, as well as another hospital in the eastern Province, have performed in total at least 782 fistula operations. The doctors there see it as an epidemic, particularly amongst the conflict's youngest and oldest victims. The youngest victim treated by Dr. Mukwege was 12 months old and his oldest victim treated was 71.<sup>49</sup> Fistulas occur because of the torture and mutilation inflicted upon victims. Women being raped with knives or shot in the vagina with guns has become a hallmark of the rape in Congo.<sup>50</sup>

Testimony collected from victims demonstrates the monstrosity of the mass rape campaign, and in particular the sexualized nature of it.<sup>51</sup> As witnessed in Rwanda, where victims' breasts and vaginal lips were also mutilated, the acts illuminate the true motives of the perpetrators. To mutilate a woman's breast or mutilate a woman's vagina is to forever remove her ability to feel sexual pleasure or bear or nourish children. It is to destroy the very essentials of womanhood in the most violent manner. For those perpetrators who force mothers to cannibalize their children, their goal is to destroy the bond between mother and child, irrevocably altering a sacred relationship.

### *Rape of the Young and the Elderly*

Further testimonies show the perpetrators' unyielding desire to break Congolese taboos, including sexual attacks on the very young and the very old. Elderly women, typically granted the utmost respect in Congolese society, have been subjected to brutal rape and torture tactics. Young children, toddlers and babies have been subject to the same tactics. To date, the youngest rape victim in the Congo was four-months old; the oldest was eighty-five.<sup>52</sup> Christine Deschryver testifies to the emotional and physical toll inflicted on some of these victims:

The last baby who was raped, it was in April. She was ten months old, so a very small baby. She was raped...I wanted to bring the baby to the hospital, but she was so injured she died in my arms. Ten months—can you imagine that?<sup>53</sup>

Both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch acknowledge superstitions in the country which fetishize sexual relations with a "prepubescent child or a post-menopausal woman" which will "make them immune from disease, including HIV/AIDS, or will cure them if they already have HIV..."<sup>54</sup>

### **The Evolution of Sexual Violence in the Congo**

WHILE THE CAUSES OF RAPE in the Congo are diverse, they still mirror the reasons women have been raped in war historically. Browmiller, Sideris, Nagel and MacKinnon all address in their theories of rape the same

exact reasons why women are being raped in the Congo. The Congo is unusual in that rape in war has typically not been as multi-dimensional. In Vietnam, women were raped because they represented the enemy and were considered the spoils of war. In Bosnia, women were raped because of their ethnicity, with the intent to impregnate them with Serbian children. In Rwanda, women were raped because of their ethnicity. The ancient Greeks would rape their enemy's wives because they were considered the spoils of war. In Mozambique, women were raped by the rebel group Renamo to force their loyalty.<sup>55</sup> Essentially, rape as a tool of warfare has, throughout history, been utilized for a singular, ultimate reason. In the case of rape *as* warfare, such as Bosnia and Rwanda, the mass rape campaign was singularly organized to facilitate the destruction of women for a specific reason. Additionally, rape as warfare is "rape under control...the destruction of peoples on the group basis is not a by-product of the rape. It is its point."<sup>56</sup>

Conversely, rape *in* warfare also serves a purpose, but it is sanctioned less by direct orders or military plans, and more by the sickness of warfare itself. This does not mean that rape in warfare does not ultimately serve a higher purpose; as MacKinnon notes, rape in war "aims to terrorize and degrade, hence demoralize, the vanquished, to symbolically and sexually reward and revenge the victors...[it is] a way of instilling terror, a tactic of demoralization, a plundering of booty..."<sup>57</sup> Merely, rape in war reflects Brownmiller's theory which draws attention to underlying social inequalities, hyper-masculinization and pervasive misogyny. If women are generally considered unequal on a societal level, when warfare erodes those societal norms rape then becomes an expression of men's intrinsic views of women.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, the conflict in the Congo remains unique in the fact that rape is both *of* war and *in* war. Moreover, the sexual violence has actually evolved throughout the last fifteen years. This is evident in the recent statistics that suggest both UN officials and civilians have perpetrated rape against Congolese women at rates similar to the armed militias and rebel groups. Therefore, these new statistics must be examined in terms of the conflict and its implications for the Congo.

### *Rape by MONUC Peace-Keepers*

MONUC, or the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is currently the United Nations' largest peace-keeping mission

deployed in any country. Close to 11,000 peace-keepers are deployed in the country. To many in the Congo, MONUC peace-keepers have symbolized the world's commitment to helping civilians in the country. Anneke Van Woudenberg, testifying before the House of Representatives in 2004, spoke of the excitement felt when MONUC finally arrived: "I remember the Congolese people lining the streets cheering and dancing as the first contingent of blue-helmets drove down one of Kinshasa's main boulevards. I shared the hope of many Congolese people that the arrival of U.N. peace-keepers would bring peace..."<sup>59</sup>

Instead, she continues to say that while MONUC has brought a much-needed degree of security to the region they have also contributed to the culture of rape that currently saturates Congolese society.<sup>60</sup> The allegations of sexual abuse by MONUC members have become widespread. Von Woudenberg remarks that "we interviewed girls, some as young as 13-years old, who had been raped by MONUC soldiers. We also spoke to girls aged between 12 and 15 who engaged in what is commonly called "survival sex"—sexual relations they entered into in order to get some food, money or protection."<sup>61</sup>

In 2005 a classified United Nations report identified "150 or so allegations of misconduct—some of them captured on videotape—[including] pedophilia, rape, and prostitution."<sup>62</sup> It is not immediately obvious how UN peacekeepers began to negotiate survival sex and commit acts of pedophilia against the very civilians they were hired to protect. UN peacekeepers similarly face little to no retribution for their sexual acts. Further, they are stationed in a country where mass-rape is pervasive. Both of these situations are aggravated by the fact that many of these sexual abuses are occurring in refugee camps that, while initially constructed to *protect* women and children, have become a microcosm of the conflict. Thus, women not only face rape from armed rebel groups, but also from UN peacekeepers and the Congolese army assigned to protect them.

### *Rape by Civilians*

Living in a culture where the abuse of women is maintained through violence, traditional values, and a system of impunity, maturing children witness rape on a daily basis. Feeley and Thomas-Jensen report that, at a community level, Congo's traditional system of community chiefs has similarly

eroded along with legal systems at the national level. Indeed, "without a strong presence of traditional higher authority or state authority, the general civilian population can commit crimes and not be held accountable" at any legal level.<sup>63</sup> Statistics illustrate a growing trend that point to greater numbers of rapes perpetrated by civilians. In North Kivu province, one NGO reported receiving 410 rape cases where the victims required hospitalization. Amnesty International reports that "one-fifth (20%) of these rape cases were attributed to FARDC soldiers, 16% to *mayi-mayi* [Mai-Mai] fighters and 11% to FDLR. The remaining attacks were reportedly committed by civilians."<sup>64</sup> In the provinces of Masisi and Goma, another NGO received 224 rape cases in three months, "of which 30% were attributed to armed group fighters, 8% to FARDC soldiers and the rest to civilians."<sup>65</sup> In both of these cases, over 50 percent of the rape cases were attributed to civilians. Mossi Mota and Duarte list a number of cases where young girls are raped by civilians. The authors write that typically these rapes are committed by police officers, teachers, neighbors, pastors, and parents. The majority of girls raped by civilians are under eighteen years old. The authors also list a number of accounts that illustrate both the severity of the attacks, as well as the culture of silence and disrespect that surrounds rape victims.<sup>66</sup>

Rape by civilians is notable for its implications for the type of society the Congo is becoming. Pratt and Werchick include examples of rape by civilians as a form of inflicting their own "legal" punishment. They write that "even the most seemingly minor of transgressions or old personal scores are now dealt with through the use of rape and violence."<sup>67</sup> Their examples of "punishment" rapes, as they label them, include one of a young girl who was "raped by the owner of a mango tree for taking a green fruit without asking."<sup>68</sup> The legal system has collapsed at *every* level of the state and civilians are beginning to take the law into their own hands. Unfortunately, their method of punishing is through the use of sexual violence.

### A Rape Society

The proliferation of rape in war has serious side-effects for the society it is inflicted upon. The conflict in the DRC has endured for fifteen years and the country is just now starting to see these side-effects through the growing rate of rapes by civilians. While exact statistics do not exist on the median age of boys and men who commit these civilian rapes, it is safe to assume



that those under the age of 30 have been irrevocably marked by conflict surrounding them.

A generation of young boys born into the conflict has seen the disintegration of women's lives through sexual violence. They have also witnessed a strengthening of women's inferior role in their societies because being a rape victim carries such a negative stigma. Holter and Sideris both contend that traditional gender roles paired with the existence of violence can lead to instances which *further* violence. Holter's theory divides women and men into "caring" and "non-caring" roles, respectively. He argues that, "the exclusion of men from caring roles and the construction of breadwinner/soldier masculinities form a common background pattern...genocides have many causes, but a common element is dehumanization, an extreme practice of noncaring and treating other people as things."<sup>69</sup> Holter sees a pride developing from this "noncaring" role, and war takes advantage of this pride. Men begin to feel more "masculine" as their actions become more violent. Increasingly, men will begin to view women as "things" or "objects" of which the frustrations of war become a catalyst to rape or assault them.<sup>70</sup>

Sideris' theory of rape in wartime builds upon Holter's in that it addresses the after-effects of such over-developed masculinity. Sideris' theory of rape as a public domain is exhibited through the rape tactics used in the Congo. She argues that the way women were raped—by their loved ones, by friends, by neighbors—"perverts social norms and in this way also threatens social and cultural integrity."<sup>71</sup> Sideris believes that this dissolution of societal values means that the rape of women in war time *transcends* their bodily suffering, and becomes the suffering of the "body-politic."<sup>72</sup> This suffering is particularly seen after the conflict is over, when a society must mend. With traditional gender roles displaced, it is women who remain victims, even after the conflict is over. Sideris notes that it is men who are often the most affected by this rape of the body-politic, that:

Acts of sexual violence strike at traditional notions of male protection of their wives, daughters and mothers....war leaves men with either an eroded sense of manhood or the option of a militarized masculine identity with the attendant legitimization of violence and killing as a way of maintaining a sense of power and control.<sup>73</sup>

Consequently, once the roles between men and women and boys and girls, are perverted by war-making and mass rape, they may never again return

to equilibrium. Women and men were unequal in the Congo before the conflict; now those inequalities have become so severe that young boys and men are committing rape women *en masse* for any reason. The words of one rapist illuminate such gender dominance:

We rape because God said that man is superior to woman. The man must command, must give the orders, and must do whatever he wants to a woman.<sup>74</sup>

Historically men in war—who have been socialized to using violence as well as militarized in their behavior—commit acts of rape against a backdrop of conflict. Browmiller insists that the evidence of mass rape occurring during war proves that the two acts of destruction are actually intertwined. Primarily, Browmiller contends that “the sickness of warfare feeds on itself.”<sup>75</sup> Rape in war is part of an ever-expanding vicious cycle. As soldiers become immersed in the stress of warfare, they feel compelled to deal with this stress by committing even more atrocities. War sets the stage for men to be violent and condones rape.

For the boys and men currently growing up in the Congo, their socialization is framed within a context of rape. Whether forced to witness the rape of loved ones, or join armed rebel groups that commit acts of sexual violence, the youth of the Congo has learned that raping women is socially acceptable. Film-maker Lisa F. Jackson interviewed countless rape survivors as well as rapists themselves for her documentary, *The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo*. One anonymous woman’s testimony illustrates the extent to which the Congo has become a rape society:

The rapists of yesterday have become the authorities and they encourage sexual violence because for them it has become a lifestyle. That is why the violence doesn’t end.<sup>76</sup>

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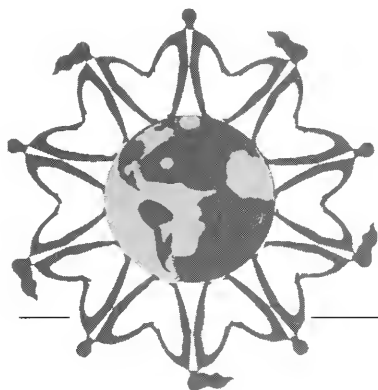
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NOTES FROM  
ABROAD





## Watching The News in Palestine

DAVID HOSEY '07

**I** WAS IN HEBRON when the first Gaza boats landed. We sat on the couch in Tariq and Sami's house and watched as the boats came into the harbor. It was the first time in years that international ships had docked in Gaza's harbor, which for so long has been cut off by the state of siege imposed by the Israeli military. The ships were full of internationals and Israelis, concerned with peace and human rights. They were met by an excited crowd of Palestinians, several of whom couldn't wait for the boats to land—they swam out to board the boats, dancing, yelling, laughing, hugging.

The boats had sailed into Gaza to challenge the siege. Sailing from Cyprus, they never once entered Israeli water. The Israeli government, which has long attempted to deny its occupation of—and thus humanitarian responsibility for—East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and especially Gaza, was forced to make a decision by this nonviolent action. Would they stop the boats, thus confirming the assertions by human rights and social justice advocates that the Israeli military was besieging Gaza? Or would they let the boats through, thus allowing the quiet force of peace to break through Gaza's long-imposed isolation?

A late night phone call between then Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and then Defense Minister Ehud Barak sealed the deal. The activists would

be allowed to pass. And, for one shining moment, the siege of Gaza was broken—not by force of arms, but by two small boats and the strength of belief.

I would later attend a press conference given by Jeff Halper, the director of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD), who was on one of the boats—and who was arrested by the Israeli military upon reentering Israel for his efforts. He recounted how excited the Palestinians of Gaza were to talk to him, many speaking Hebrew better than he spoke Arabic. One man in particular said he was so excited to get to use Hebrew—before the siege, he had worked in Israel, and had many Israeli friends. It had become increasingly difficult to communicate with them as blockade of Gaza wore on.

We sat and watched the boats. Our hosts, ever hospitable, told us that we didn't have to watch the news in Arabic, that they would find an English channel for us. Every English channel carried the same news—now President Barack Obama had chosen now Vice President Joseph Biden to be his running mate. We knew this already. We switched back to the Gaza boats.

When we sat down later to eat, one of our hosts, a young Palestinian man, turned to me and said, "This is the only good news I can ever remember hearing about Gaza."

THE ARABIC WORD FOR HEBRON is Khalil. It means "the friend," as does the Hebrew word—"Hebron." That famous patriarch Abraham—Ibrahim in Arabic—is buried here, they say, he who was called "the friend of God." You can go see his tomb, and that of his wife Sara—but it is split, divided by Israeli military checkpoints, so that Muslims and Jews never interact. This has been the case ever since the rampage of a right-wing religious settler, Baruch Goldstein, in 1994. Goldstein killed 29 Muslims and wounded 150 as they were praying in the mosque.

Hebron is a divided city, an occupied city. Deep in the southern West Bank, it is one of the largest Palestinian cities, and yet a small group of radical religious settlers protected by Israeli soldiers has the city in a stranglehold. Checkpoints and military incursions disrupt the daily life of the Palestinians living there. The once thriving old city has become a ghost town. Palestinians, accompanied by Israeli and international human rights activists, resist nonviolently simply by keeping their shops open in the face of intimidation, military closure, and violent attacks.

AND SO WE SAT in Hebron, the city of the patriarchs, the microcosm of occupation, and watched the Gaza boats land.

ON ELECTION NIGHT, we were in Jerusalem. We switched between Al Jazeera, BBC, and CNN. They all showed the crowds dancing in the street in front of the White House. And we wanted to dance, too.

The BBC ran a tagline about the attack on Gaza that night. Al Jazeera cut away from election coverage for a report—Israeli air force strikes. Israeli special forces on the ground. Seven killed. Will the ceasefire hold? The Israelis were bombing tunnels that they claimed were being used to smuggle weapons or might be used to kidnap Israeli soldiers. In actuality, the tunnels exist because of the siege. Weapons might indeed be smuggled through them, but so is food, petrol, kitchen appliances. The tunnels *are* the Gazan economy; the attacks on them are merely an extension of the assault on the life of Gaza and the intentional de-development of an entire people. The lifting of the closure imposed by the Israeli and Egyptian governments was stipulated by the terms of the ceasefire, but instead Gaza remained closed, the tunnels continued to operate, and thus the Israeli military had its pretense for striking.

CNN, of course, didn't mention the attack at all. The next day, they reported on retaliatory rocket fire.

THE DAY AFTER election night, traffic was stopped on the way to work. We sat, unmoving, for five minutes, then ten, then fifteen. I finally got off of the bus to see what was happening, and there they were: two massive, yellow trailers, bringing the big, jackhammer-style bulldozers to their destination in the Shoufat neighborhood of East Jerusalem. Under occupation, seemingly innocuous things take on violent and tragic meaning. Anywhere else, you could think to yourself—"Perhaps there's road construction. Perhaps there's been an accident." But in East Jerusalem, the bulldozers could only have one *raison d'être*.

I followed the trailers to the house that was slated for demolition. The Bishara family had built a small house—too small for such a large family—and of course, had done so without a permit. For a Palestinian in East Jerusalem to receive a building permit, they must go through an expensive, confusing, and nearly always unsuccessful process that would do Kafka proud. Palestinians build for their families anyway, and live under constant

fear of home demolition. When will the army show up with the demolition order? And once they do, when will they demolish the house? Tomorrow? Two weeks from now? Two months from now? Two years? Never?

But what options did the Bishara family have? They could have built outside of Jerusalem—the PA in Ramallah or in Bethlehem would not have stopped them. But then they would lose their Jerusalem ID, their key to health care, to employment rights in Israel. Their already limited rights would disappear into nothingness, demolished even more quickly than their house.

The family usually has less than an hour between the time the demolition equipment shows up and the demolition itself. By the time I got there, the military had already surrounded the house—dozens of heavily armed soldiers with US-made M16s and bullet proof vests, Army jeeps, mounted police, all against a pathetic crowd of unarmed Palestinians, who could do nothing but watch. I called ICAHD and the Ecumenical Accompaniment program offices. Somebody called the UN. I ran to the office to get somebody with a camera, someone else to witness, to remember, to somehow refuse to turn away, however useless it might seem to watch and to witness.

On the way back, we heard the demolition start. The pounding of the bulldozers, sharp and deep and once, and that horrible sound of shattering concrete. It's a sound I'll never forget, try as I might.

And just as we heard that awful sound, a Palestinian man in a pickup truck drove past us, beeped his horn, and said "Obama! Yeah!" as he flashed us a thumbs up sign.

THE HOUSE IS A TANGLED MESS of rebar and shattered concrete, just like so many before it. The Bishara family sits, despondent. Nobody is sure what to say or what to do. The UN shows up, asks questions, and promises shelter of some sort. Relatives show up to begin moving things, possessions salvaged from the wreckage, to the houses of extended family members. Reporters arrive to talk to the family. The mother of the family arrives, wails, throws down her bags and thrusts her hands up to the sky at the sight of the wreckage.

And we stand and we watch, and we ask ourselves questions. Where is the hope here? Where is the dream here? Where is God in all of this?

I WATCHED THE LATEST destruction of Gaza on any news outlet I could find, sitting in my parents' house in Maryland, feeling hopeless and useless and alone. And there was little that any of my friends could do, little that they could say to their friends there—if they could ever get through to them—who were huddling in basements, trying to keep their families safe as the U.S.-made bombs and rockets pounded down from U.S.-provided F-16s and Apache helicopters into schools, police stations, UN facilities, mosques, homes. Another boat full of activists tried to go in, and was purposefully rammed by the Israeli navy. I remember the sick, wrenching feeling when I realized the US public simply would not know what we knew, any of us who were watching that night in Jerusalem when the ceasefire was first broken. Any of us who had ever been denied entry to Gaza. Any of us who had ever seen the Wall, the fighter jets thundering overhead, the day to day situation of oppressive, structural violence under which Palestinians are forced to live. No, the rhetoric in the US had been chosen long before this latest eruption of violence, and so of course it was not context or history that was discussed, but terror and self-defense, terror and self-defense, terror and self-defense. No change at all—just business as banal and as violent as usual.

I WAS IN WASHINGTON, DC for inauguration day. I mingled amongst the crowds, talking to people, passing out postcard petitions for the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation. The energy was electric, infectious even in the frigid wind.

But I simply could not, and still cannot, shake the surreal juxtaposition of that Palestinian man, smiling at us as that nightmarish sound began. The people dancing in the streets of DC as the bombs fell on Gaza—back in November, before the glut of bloodshed and the massive destruction of civilian infrastructure after Christmas.

And yet, there is another juxtaposition that has taken root somewhere deep in my brain, a seed of hope and of justice and of peace. It is the image of that living room in Hebron as the boats landed in Gaza, as the work and the dreams of peacemakers and justice-seekers came to fruition and, for one glorious moment, we transcended the violent barriers with which we so often construct our collective identities.

Whether as US citizens or as citizens of the world, as people of faith or as people of hope, we have such massive responsibility. As the US-made warplanes and weapons--\$3 billion a year worth, if you are interested—continue to rain hell upon the residents of Gaza, of the West Bank, of East Jerusalem, of Lebanon, we are faced with a choice. We can sit back in hopelessness or apathy, until the flames that are being fanned by our tax dollars and our lack of care burn us once again. Or we can act to create space for the sudden and surprising in-breaking of a more just and peaceful world.

We *can* create space for peacemaking, and we must. We can question the US policy of pumping weaponry into the largest army in the Middle East engaged in the longest standing conflict in the world today. We can question US corporate policies that profit from 42 years of Israeli occupation—the armored Caterpillar bulldozers and the Motorola-produced bomb fuses and military surveillance systems of which we as investors and consumers have moral ownership. We can create space for Palestinians and Israelis who are seeking peace and justice to act. We can educate and witness and accompany, even as Palestinians resist by continuing on with their life in the face of everyday dispossession and humiliation at the hands of the occupation.

Once we've watched the news in Palestine, what other choice do we have?





## Matters of Life and Death Along the Garden Route

KATE TOWSON '09

I WAS STANDING at the edge of the Bloukrans River Bridge, preparing to jump off. The bridge is the tallest and longest in all of South Africa, located along the country's beautiful Garden Route. Like most parts of the Garden Route, the Bloukrans Bridge is book-ended by the ocean and the mountains. Joining the two together is a rocky, treacherous gorge into which, in a few moments, I was supposed to send myself flying. I was attached by a bungee-cord thicker than a tree-trunk, but this information is still hard for the brain to comprehend. They had attached my feet to the bungee with what appeared to be Velcro.

"Put your feet over the edge," they commanded me. I did. Or rather, I thought I did.

"Put your feet further over *more*."

I didn't want to. Then, without further warning, I felt strong arms holding me steady and the entirety of the bridge screaming—"5...4...3...2...1... BUNGEE!" Apparently at this point I was supposed to jump, because they screamed at me, "Jump! Jump!"

"What? You want me to what?"

"JUMP!" they screamed.

And so I did.

Bungee jumping is something fun to talk to your friends about, but

never do. Like getting a tattoo, or going for a road trip, it's a desire rarely expected to be put into practice. My family, however, had decided that we were going to bungee jump in South Africa. This isn't just any old bungee jump. It's the highest bungee jump *in the whole world*, as ranked by the Guinness Book of World Records, at a whopping 713 feet high.

And it's terrifying.

I discovered just how terrifying as we pulled into the bungee-jumping parking lot. It is run by a company aptly named "Face-Adrenaline." The site is decorated by posters that say "Fear is Temporary. Regret is Forever," and other such mantras. As with most things in my life, I had bragged nonchalantly to everyone I knew about the Towson family bungee-jump expedition. I brushed away their worries and concerns, scoffing at the question, "But won't you be afraid?"

This was a stupid idea, because when I finally saw the bridge we would be hurtling ourselves off I immediately changed my mind. I had boxed myself in with my bravado-I had to do it whether I wanted to or not. Or else...everyone would think I was lame.

In fact, after seeing the bridge, no one in the family wanted to do it. But the more we thought about it, the more we knew Face-Adrenaline was right-fear *is* temporary. We knew we would have a great time, it's just about that initial jump, the first seconds of free-fall that made us hesitate. When we paid at the register, we looked like a family awaiting execution. My brother kept trying to get us "pumped up" by saying things like "No one's ever died bungee jumping, right?" This, of course, upset my mother as she thought he was jinxing himself, as in: "No one's ever died bungee jumping....except that poor Towson boy." Signing the waiver made us feel even more uneasy. If bungee jumping was so safe, why did we have to promise not to sue if/when one of us died?

Logically, it made no sense to me.

But whether we liked it or not, we were suited up in our harnesses and taken to the edge of the bridge. The Bloukrans River Bridge is constructed in such a way that to get to the center part underneath it, you have to cross a teeny-tiny bridge on the side. It looked like it was constructed with tooth-picks and gum-drops. There was a light breeze, and the thing swayed back and forth like a theme-park ride. Of course, I looked down, under the pretense of "getting used to the height." The bottom loomed 713 feet below

me—white-water angrily rushing through a narrow gorge, in which tall gray rocks leered menacingly and something glinted. Was that *broken glass*?

Why? Why was I doing this?

The crew that runs the jumps are all handshakes and easy smiles. In fact, once I got to the center of the bridge, I immediately relaxed. They are pumped you are jumping, and they let you know it. And pretty soon, *you* feel pumped that you're jumping. There was a man in a small glass booth that began to spin tracks—a mish-mash of Eurotrash-techno-pop played at an earsplitting decibel. I felt like I was in a rave. The crew began dancing like they were in a rave, but they ran a tight ship. It took exactly three-minutes for each person to jump, and they had a quick turn-over rate. This is successful, in that there is literally no time for you to change your mind, which is how I ended up trussed and harnessed and standing at the edge of a bridge before I even knew it.

And, as I had guessed, bungee jumping was one of the single most thrilling, exhilarating, nay, *life-affirming*, things I have ever had the opportunity to do. For about six seconds, you are in complete free-fall. You can't feel the harness, there is nothing connecting you, and you are literally flying freely through the air. It is, I imagine, what graduating must feel like.

But then, the bungee grabs you, and you are snapped back up into the air, and then down again, and then up, and then down. It is like your own personal roller-coaster ride, and it is awesome. The landscape whirls around you like a kaleidoscope: ocean-gorge-mountain-gorge-mountain-ocean-mountain-gorge-ocean. But for me, the best part came when the bungee stopped and you were hanging, suspended in mid-air. The gorge was right below me, and the river water was actually an amethyst color, sparkling in the late afternoon sunlight. There are no sounds—no cars, no airplanes, no people talking. It is you and nature and silence.

I've realized that these are the kind of memories I hope to fondly reminisce about when I'm eighty-years old, telling my life story to some audience, impressing them with my spirit of adventure. Yes, I was twenty-one. I was living in Africa. I jumped off a bridge, and lived to tell the tale.





## The Post-Apartheid Generation

GRACE HARTER '10

**L**EARNING DURING STUDY ABROAD very rarely takes place inside the classroom. At Rhodes University in South Africa, the primary lesson was apartheid. However, the things I learned about apartheid during class were often complemented, appended, or flat out denied by my social experiences. Apartheid's lingering effects on South Africa are most obviously seen through the continued economic inequality; it is much more challenging to gauge is its ongoing influence on race relations.

South Africa's first post-apartheid generation is now reaching university age. The ubiquitous socializing present in college culture affords the opportunity, as an outsider, to collect impressions and thoughts on a particular issue. The most outstanding question for me was race relations amongst the university students and how they reflect the image of racial harmony that South Africa is trying to project—or how they challenge this conception.

Race relations among South Africa's youngest generation are often paradoxical and confusing to outsiders. The first generation to live in an era without apartheid is considerably more multicultural and mixed than their parents', but their beliefs and practices are conflicted by the attitude of their parents and the history of their country.

The question of heritage is often unsettling. Not only is the country divided into racial groups (blacks, whites, and everyone else under "colored"), but the blacks are divided by ethnic group, the whites are divided by descent, and the coloreds are divided into so many different groups it is puzzling why they are in the same racial category.

The phrase "Proudly South African" has become popularized to instill a sense of unity in the population, but the target audience of the message is unclear. The African pride that has grown since 1994 is both unifying in one sense and divisive in another. Arguments on who has the right to be called African are popular.

"You cannot be African unless you are black," one black student told a lecture hall. "If you are white, your ancestors were just colonizers from Europe."

He was answered angrily by a white student who said, "My family has lived here for generations—you can't tell me I'm not an African."

However, for every white student who lays claim to the term "African," there is another who thinks of himself as English, or even another who says he is Afrikaans, meaning of Dutch descent. While they all are South African nationals, there is often an attachment to original country of origin. Descent is not always as clearly delineated as some students would have you believe, but it is often important in shaping their cultural loyalties.

The Afrikaners are perhaps the tightest knit group in the white community. Since the party that implemented apartheid was Afrikaans, they have taken the brunt of the blame in the past fifteen years. They are often stereotyped as dumb (since their English is accented) or racist and the cause of South Africa's problems. Some English descended students in particular have contempt for the Afrikaner culture, seeing it as anachronistic.

Many whites expunge guilt from themselves and, more importantly, their parents by assigning culpability. "It was those racist Afrikaners," one student said. "We should've shot them all after 1994."

Blame is not as important for black and colored students at Rhodes. The majority of race-related discussion centered on how effective the government has been since apartheid has ended, and how far South Africa still has to go. Many cited frustration with their parents, who often told them how lucky they are. "It's done, it's over," one student said. "Stop complaining about how things were."

While Rhodes is diverse socially, economically, and racially, there is not

much mixing between groups. There are social spots and stereotypes the students cling to; one bar and one club are for the blacks and colored and the others are for the white students. Segregation is culturally and historically enforced. The white students are classified as rich partiers; the black students are said to never leave the library.

The students at Rhodes are not the ones hit hardest by the legacy of apartheid. I spent time volunteering at a boys' shelter in the neighboring township. The residents of Joza, Grahamstown's township, continue to be disenfranchised by apartheid's legacy. Collectively, their socioeconomic status has not changed since the end of apartheid.

"I hate white people," more than one boy told me. It was uncomfortable until I realized they did not consider me white. As a foreigner, I had no part in their country's history, and so I was free from blame. "You're American, you're not like *them*," one of the boys said. The boys at the shelter and other township residents were unaffected by America's waning popularity; for them, it represented a utopia of equal opportunity. America's own struggles with racial relations are not as obvious to those who have based their image around television and movies.

The institution of all rights and privileges for all nonwhites since the fall of apartheid cannot make up for the disasters that continue to be caused by the public education system. Conditions are so poor in these government schools that it is almost unheard of for any child above low income to attend. All whites attend private schools.

To rectify the achievement gap, private schools and universities have been implementing quota systems. Much more aggressive than the similarly controversial affirmative action system in America, these quotas and accompanying scholarships are responsible for some of the new diversity seen in many South African schools. However, amongst the upperclass white students in particular, there is a certain amount of bitterness. As a foreigner, I was a perfect candidate to hear lamentations about the quota system. All were prefaced with the phrase, "I'm not racist, but..." Complaints about the system ranged from its unfairness to skepticism about its effects.

On the opposing side, the system has been hailed as an important remedy to the achievement gap. The black education system was purposefully dismantled during apartheid and called "Bantu education," a name that has since become synonymous with very poor learning. It was the intent of the state to keep most nonwhites non-skilled, so a system was created to barely

educate the youth. Though the act has obviously been repealed since, most government schools still operate with unsatisfactory funds and the same level of education they offered under apartheid.

It is a true mark of the education system that as a nineteen year old, I was given a full teaching job at a South African public school after simply mentioning that I would like to volunteer. I was trained by being given textbooks and then told to go teach my classes. If any of these kids were going to go to university, they would need a scholarship and some sort of help. Because they were set back from the beginning, by high school it was usually too late. The Bantu education system is still affecting today's youth and another generation is growing up unskilled and unprepared. The unemployment rate of the Joza township is estimated at between 70 and 80 percent.

The township is distinctly alien and otherworldly in comparison to Grahamstown proper. It is hotter, steeper, and more polluted. Sometimes there are more livestock roaming the streets than people. Corrugated tin shacks lean haphazardly next to a few incongruous plaster and brick houses. Income distribution is as unequal in the township as in the country. There are nice parts of Joza, there are dangerous parts, and then, on the very edges, there are squatter camps. All of the varied areas of the sprawling township are unfairly pigeonholed into one black hole of danger and destitution. As a woman, I would never walk alone in Joza, but I also never felt like I was in danger. Many students were shocked when I told them where my extracurriculars took place; a township is one place a white girl does not venture.

My volunteering experience is not unique. Most of the international students at the university did some type of volunteer work, and almost all were pleased with their experiences. They all went through the same casual training and trial by fire experiences at usual volunteering spots around Grahamstown and in the township, like the AIDS clinic and the ARV center. Traveling, I met many people who were in the country for volunteer reasons. The fame of Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, and other heroes has made South Africa a magnet for young social activists.

The sense of hope that accompanied the 1994 elections has since faded for many young South Africans. There is frustration with the government and impatience with the rate of progress. White immigration to Australia to escape the rocketing crime rates and fear of reversed apartheid has become increasingly popular; many recently graduated students look overseas for



jobs. However, those in the lowest economic bracket remain oddly cheerful and expectant of better times. "We have equal rights now," said one student at the township school. "So soon we will also live equally."





## Hong Kong: Culture Behind the Skyline

LAURA REITER '10

FOR OUR FIRST FIELD TRIP in Hong Kong Heritage, we rode a bus up a mountain, trekked past an active construction site, and up stairs well on their way to becoming unserviceable to a pair of caves ornamented with some unassuming statues and other religious artifacts that had clearly seen better days. The face of the statue in one of these had obviously been repainted many times, and crudely; the latest layer of paint was peeling. A sign in Chinese characters nearby was the only indication that this site was of interest, and it too had been repainted. Our professor pointed out that the painted-on characters did not match those that were carved. Only this discrepancy, between the old and new way of writing that specific character, indicated the possible age of the area. This, our professor told us, is the site of the greatest religious and historical importance in the New Territories, a region to the north of Hong Kong Island claimed when the British had need to accommodate a growing population and fortify defenses.

These caves, despite their dilapidated and altogether unheralded appearance, have been a site of religious significance since the fifth century AD, when a Buddhist monk from Southeast Asia settled there to provide religious support to a neighboring naval garrison responsible for screening all

ships making their way to Canton and Mainland China. Even after the monk established a monastery elsewhere in the area, the caves were considered incredibly powerful, and were often sought out by those desiring safe passage on the sea as well as by persons of significance. This continued until the coastal evacuation in the 1660s, when the nun hermit residing there was forced to leave. A series of Taoist and Buddhist institutions followed, and continue to exist there today. The site, however, has slipped into a state of serious disrepair thanks to a series of legal disputes and bureaucratic red tape that have not allowed its maintenance.

There is no denying that Hong Kong stands as a beacon of capitalist progress and cutting-edge development in East Asia and the world, boasting a thriving economic sector, world-class tourist draws (notably the Gucci and Armani caliber shopping), and of course a skyline eye-catching enough to earn itself a featured appearance in the summer 2008 blockbuster, *The Dark Knight*. I have heard that the only culture of Hong Kong is Capitalism, and at times it seems like the locals are trying their best to make that true. Almost everyone at Lingnan University, where I spent my year as an exchange student, is a Business major, and all of them hurry around campus in the same professionally impersonal black suit, trying to keep pace with their city, a task that is certain to keep them running for some time. Most of the buildings in Central, the main cosmopolitan center of Hong Kong, were built within the last three decades. Only two percent are from before 1946. The neon lights and skyscrapers popular on postcards have a tendency to shine so brightly that they blind observers to all else. Many things, like history and culture, seem at the risk of being left casualties of economic progress. I am often left wondering whether today's grandparents recognize the city at all, or whether their children will when a few more decades have passed as even the more recent past is continuously falling victim to renovation.

My Hong Kong Heritage class which was, surprisingly, taught by a British historian, spent a semester trying to get a grip on that past which is quickly becoming lost in the shuffle. There has been little to nothing written on the history of Hong Kong before British colonization, and most of the resources that we read in class were written by our professor, who has spent the last several decades interviewing the older generation and compiling as much information as he can while there are still people alive who

are able to remember it. We witnessed his frequent discussions with one student, the son of boatpeople whose grandfather recalls some of the songs that were traditionally learned to help remember good sailing routes and other necessary information. He was trying to convey to the student how valuable that knowledge is, and how important that we try to catalogue it. Very few of these songs have ever been recorded or are even known, and there are fewer left that were taught them. Time is running out on that part of history.

Time may be short for even pieces of history of the last century. A guest lecturer came into our class to share his work on World War Two history in Hong Kong. Some of the highly fortified British defenses survive thanks to structures intended to resist wartime-scale destruction, which still serve them well in the face of more pedestrian construction and deconstruction. Smaller pillboxes and other structures from that era remain because they have been able to hide from progress, but often they are plagued by graffiti or simply the wear of time and weather. Others have been replaced with swimming pools. On the verge of tears, the historian explained that each time one of these locations becomes threatened by a construction site, he writes to the government asking that it be restored or saved. He has yet to receive any response. Even his requests that signs be put up to indicate sites of interest have been ignored.

With this lack of government compassion for the past, especially in the scope of its oft-blinding future ambition, it feels at times that this history will become simply another sad loss that goes largely unnoticed. The people of Hong Kong, however, do not seem ready to allow that to happen regardless of the position of their government, at least not yet.

I was fortunate to witness this continued reverence for the past at the Ta Tsiu, one of the most significant religious festivals in traditional local culture. The Tsiu is such a large-scale and expensive production that it can only be celebrated about once every ten years or more in those villages that continue to practice it. It has roots in a Taoist ritual of cleansing the village of vicious spirits that have accumulated and repairing the cosmos and has evolved into an elaborate practice in social cohesion and village pride. Every household must be involved in this cleansing or it will risk the security of the rest of the village. Even as Christian missionaries began converting individuals from the traditional spirituality of which the Ta Tsiu is a part,

the community required that everyone remain involved in the festival, often performing those tasks that are of less spiritual significance such as cleaning or cooking.

This communal attitude is most reflected in the Pong, one of the most central aspects of the Ta Tsiu. The Pong is a kind of roster that names every person who is a member of the village, and villagers who long ago emigrated return for this festival to make sure that their names, as well as those of their spouses and children, have been included correctly. Even for those living abroad, this signification of their place in the community continues to be vital.

Walking around the Tsiu grounds, most of the people were dressed in a way that would not attract attention on any street in the United States. They talked on their cell phones and bought snacks for their children from the stalls there, but as per tradition there was no meat eaten in the festival grounds. The Taoist priests went about their rituals generally disregarded by the rest of the people, just as they had for hundreds of years. The king of hell sat prominently, waiting for the parade on the last night that would see him burnt to free the village of malicious ghosts. The Pong was on display, and showed a mix of English names along with the Chinese characters. Regardless, this was a part of Hong Kong that I am sure a villager of any age would recognize and proof that there is still culture for those willing to find it.

# Contributors

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Tricia Bonman '09 is an International Studies and Hispanic Studies double major. She studied abroad in Granada, Spain and went abroad with the Washington College Summer Program in Tanzania in summer 2008. She received a Douglass Cater Society of Junior Fellows grant to conduct research in Cambodia, interning with the consulting firm Crossroads to Development in Phnom Penh. Tricia is a student board member of the Douglass Cater Society of Junior Fellows and a member of Sigma Delta Pi, Pi Sigma Alpha and Phi Beta Kappa. She plans on pursuing graduate studies in the field of international development or human rights.

Gillian Bourassa '09 is a History major pursuing teaching certification in secondary social studies. She is the Treasurer of the Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society, the President of Catholic Campus Ministry, and will graduate as a member of Phi Beta Kappa and Omicron Delta Kappa. Her senior thesis examined Pope Innocent III and his relationship with the University of Paris, and she is interested in topics in Medieval Europe and twentieth-century world history. Her work has previously been published in both the *Washington College Review* and the *Washington College International Studies Review*, and she was a Comegys Bight Fellow in 2008 and has presented papers at various conferences.

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## COLOPHON

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